

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Touching the Skin of Ghosts: Women, Archives, Local History

by

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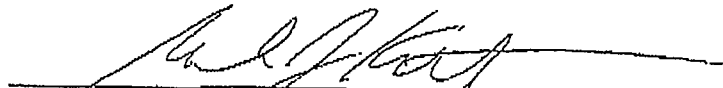
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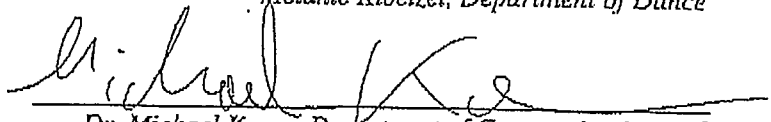
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Abstract

This is a study of desire, embodiment and absence that explores three specific sites of convergence relating to the Prince House, a reconstituted historical site currently located within Heritage Park Historical Village in Calgary, Alberta. The objective of this project is to explore the link between performance and history through a critical engagement with place that upsets and challenges notions of archive, truth, fantasy and fiction. By mobilizing various notions of archive, I aim to gain insight into the ways in which knowledge is stored, meaning is made, and narratives of history are codified. This study is predicated on the hypotheses that silences are never neutral, that absences are never a-political, and that ghosts (understood as the refugees of a specific kind of archival violence) are both culturally and temporally site-specific, as well as gendered.

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Jeff Stewart, thank you for going outside with me and for helping me to continue to find freedom in the hills. At great heights, on the rock and ice, under the wild blue sky, we can do anything.

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Preface:

Memories of Death

When I finally cut myself free from my desk and office space and went to visit the archives housed at the Glenbow Museum in downtown Calgary, it was remarkably cold. I had to stamp my feet as I entered the warm foyer. My toes, cut off from my feet by the beginnings of frostbite, no longer felt like my own. I stood in the path of a hot blast of air and let myself thaw. My appendages pulsed with the growing warmth, straining outwards. I wondered suddenly if I was dressed properly for a visit to this codified institution of history - and then felt instantly annoyed by this thought, anxious two times over. My hands were stained with ink where I had written notes on them, and my fingernails were cut down to the quick. I wished suddenly that they were not. I wished for the outward trappings of someone who was *up to the task*. What was I doing there? What if something of me rubbed up against the past and stayed there, marking it in some way? Foremost in my mind: what if I missed my cue and failed to make meaning? What if I missed the point?

The interaction we have with history is, in so many ways, embodied - is localized *in* the body. I felt this as I sifted through files of clippings and letters, notes, sheaves of piano music, prayer books and photographs. The materials I had requested came to me in three large accordion files and were left on the table in front of me. No microfiche. No gloves or magnifying glasses. Turning paper over in my hands, holding parchment up to the light, I pressed my fingerprints against the bare skin of history. Sometime in the afternoon, flushed from heat and the stilted air, I moved too quickly reaching for my camera across the table and I jostled a pile of newspaper clippings with my elbow. I was

too late to catch them, could only clutch at their wake in horror as they cascaded to the ground and scattered. In seconds they lay strewn across the floor like the broken casings of butterflies, or a mound of scales shed from a great snake.

Crouching beneath the table, sliding scattered papers towards me, I imagined the coils of an enormous basilisk dropping down from the ceiling, unfurling in stealth through the shelves and stacks and well-ordered drawers, winding her sinuous way around computers and finding-aids – disappearing before anyone noticed her presence, vanishing in the blink of an eye, like a trick of the light. Only the trace of scales scattered on the ground would hint that she was ever there at all; a record of the violence that could have been but wasn't, or that maybe happened but was never recorded. As I stacked the yellow, curled clippings back into a demure pile, squared off at the corners, I risked a glance at the two archives librarians sitting at the reference desk eight or nine feet away from me. They were attending to their computer screens, unruffled and serene, and I began to realize that the horror of documents falling in chaos had not been observed by anyone. The sudden threat of violence remained unmarked. Above me, the snake settled herself in the ceiling beams and darted her tongue out, taking the tip of her tail between her teeth, considering its contours. Her eyes were sardonic. Ouroboros, I thought. A serpent eating her own tail: the past and the future, the authority of both origin and annihilation. Aggressive and muscular, this is what Jacques Derrida describes as the death drive, the embodied instinct for destruction that devours, in advance, its own archive, hiding its interruption of history at the very moment of its interference. This invisible savagery, in the words of Derrida *eludes perception. It leaves no monument. As an inheritance, it leaves only its erotic simulacrum, its pseudonym in painting...lovely*

impressions. These impressions are perhaps the very origin of what is so obscurely called the beauty of the beautiful. As memories of death (11, emphasis added).

The snake of my imagination remained curled in the rafters for the duration of my first visit to the downtown archives, and my second, and the many other journeys to different archives undertaken throughout this project. Her muscles ripple beneath the smooth surface of these pages. As I delve into the lives of women, the invisibility of their forms, the formlessness of their bodies, she winds her way throughout this study, a mnemonic for the (potential) violence of the archive itself, as well as the gendered spaces between the elements of the past that are remembered. Finally, I carry this image forward as a marker of desire; of my own (gendered, embodied) desire to *make meaning*, and the different kinds of desires that are always already present when one engages with notions of the archive and narratives of the past.

“Maybe bodies come to be “ours” when we recognize them as traumatic. Sensing their need for a foothold, we take them into us. Sooner or later we are burrowing into them.”
-Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (18)

CHAPTER 1

SPATIAL PERFORMANCES OF THE DEAD

Once I went to Heritage Park Historical Village with my teacher and my third grade class. We dressed like pioneers and pretended to go to school in the one room schoolhouse. It was cold. The wind blew through the bare branches and whipped along the dirt road. In the schoolhouse we were skittish, made bold by the alterity of our strange clothes, our lunches in baskets against the wall. Over recess, my friends and I ran through the empty streets, making our dresses whip out behind us, pioneer children running wild. Because our baskets were empty, and because the dark turrets were the highest feature of the landscape, we cut through a small lane on the main street and into the yard of the Prince House. Someone pointed up to a window on the third floor and we followed the line of her gaze. The glass was cloudy and opaque and the lace curtains were so intricately designed that we could not see in. The surface of glass reflected the pale contours of the sky as perfectly as a mirror. The girl pointing told us that the house was haunted - by a lady in a white dress. We pretended to be afraid. This was my first performance at the Prince House, though there would be many more to come. Against a backdrop of stone and dark windows and snarls of leafless mock orange, we staged our fear. When we became too cold to stay we ran away again – back to the make-believe classroom. I cannot remember now which of us pointed to the third storey window, but I remember looking over my shoulder as I ran away from the house. The gently swaying skeleton frames of trees reflected in the window made me think of a white hand drawing the curtains back, reaching out towards us as we receded into the sky.

When I think about that day, I cannot remember what dress I wore and this surprises me. I was the type of child to put tremendous store in those kinds of details. I do remember that my mother braided my hair, and her fingers tugging at the ends of my long brown plaits became the template for the fingers I attributed to the ghost. My mother's fingers are long and lovely. I also remember the taste and smell of wood-smoke in the classroom. I remember the chill of that day, winter in the prairies.

Calgary, the city in which I was born, was once a frontier town. Its streets and its horizon were etched onto the prairies and foothills by pioneers who braved extreme cold in the winter and the kind of heat in the summer that can become oppressive if it lasts. Sometimes, it will rain for an entire summer. Other years it scarcely rains at all. The Prince House, originally built by Peter Anthony Prince in 1894 in what is now the Eau Claire district of Calgary, is a marked component of our local mythology. Peter Prince owned a saw mill and it was he who first brought electric lighting to the city streets. The local history of Peter Prince and the architectural features of the Prince House, which was the largest house in Calgary when it was built, are well known to historians. Peter Prince's business papers, which include patents and agreements over land use, his proof of citizenship and even documentation of disaster - deaths of workers during the chaotic log drives down the churning length of the Bow River - have been archived and are stored at the Glenbow Museum in downtown Calgary. It was Peter Prince who planted the name "Eau Claire" on Calgary's riverbank, after Eau Claire Wisconsin. These and other related details are very well known. However, the solidity of this preponderate history is not the history I seek to follow. Instead I aim to track a history that seems to me to flow and froth like the frigid waters of a mythic river. Sometimes, exceeding the

banks, it spills over, spreading like a stain, dampening the edges of everything. Most of the time however, it runs along underground in almost perfect silence. At many points, I cannot hear or see it. I cannot remember what it looked like, how the air tasted in the years that it flowed above the earth, un-obscured by mist. These years happened long before me and now are gone. The contours of the banks are also gone and in many places the only trace that it was ever there at all are piles of stones that are rounded at the corners and marked with the rust that once flowed invisibly in the water. At night the rounded edges of the stones whisper the word “river” over and over. Like a stain, these whispers spill into my dreams and now, like the pull of my mother’s hands, these whispers pull at me.

To trace the kind of history at stake in this study I return to the “lady in the white dress,” dwelling in the woundingly touching detail of this imaginary. To understand the anatomy of this study, I draw our attention to the geography of her body. The real work has not yet begun and already I have given you her hand, which you will remember is modelled in my imagination after my mother’s lovely hands. To render a topography of this study, I begin in the hollow made by the outline of this spectre’s absent body. I rest here, and I cannot get out. Somehow, she has become mine. Sensing her need for a foothold, I have pulled her body into me and now I find myself, like Peggy Phelan found *herself*, burrowing, “into her and into her” (42).

What *is* at stake in this study are the absences, fractures, and fragments of history that have gone away. In an effort to trace the vanishing points and erasures, I engage with a variety of archives concerning the Prince House, its past, its present and the implications of its future. This is an analysis that is impelled by a personal connection to

the Prince House first established as a child and strengthened, challenged and changed topologically through the intervening years. Central to this engagement are the following facts: that the Prince House was originally built near the banks of the Bow River in Calgary in 1894. In 1966, through a confusing and strange chain of events, the house was donated to Heritage Park, a living history village located in Calgary, Alberta. In 1967 it was cut into pieces and carried away from its original location and replanted some twenty kilometres away. Currently, the house sits on spacious grounds and is framed by tall poplars. In 2006, while employed briefly at Heritage Park, I spent a night alone in the Prince House, trying to press myself more intimately into the hollow made by the outline of the absent “lady in a white dress,” trying to be physically closer to the past.

Now, through a theoretical engagement with various archival materials connected to the site, combined with a somatic interaction with place that takes into account feeling, sensation, detail and *mise-en-scène*, I attempt to link public records, testimony, memory, and lore to the memorable features of landscape, both interior and exterior. This approach follows Mike Pearson and Michael Shank’s work on what they call deep mapping, an attempt to record and represent the grain and patina of place by enacting “the intimate connection between personal biography, social identities and the biography of place” (17). I do this with my attention turned towards the cultural traces that emerge when one attempts to inhabit history, asking: what does it mean to inhabit a site that is explicitly historical, and how is such a site archived? What hidden archives do these archives shelter? What kinds of silences do they perpetuate; whom do they wound? I predicate these questions on the hypotheses that silences are never neutral, that absences

are never a-political, and that ghosts (understood as the refugees of a specific kind of archival violence) are both culturally and temporally site-specific, as well as gendered.

In this study, the ghosts that emerge are treated and analyzed as indicators of gaps between fragments of historical fact. In some cases they are the immaterial markers of material bodies left behind, bodies left unmarked. As an imaginative trope or allegorical category, ghosts mark spaces of indeterminacy (or possibility) in which what we know collides with what we do not know. Ghosts, in this context, mark the divisions between what we understand and what, in de Certeau's words, is "forgotten in order to maintain the representation of a present intelligibility" (*The Writing of History*, 4). Living alongside ghosts, as I have done throughout this project, has not been to dwell within a morbid, damp, earthy, fetid place but instead to inhabit a place of possibility and liminality in which the invisible currents of politics and power swirl and swirl. Despite ones best efforts and most meticulous research, there will always be certain things about the past we cannot know - and this is often because certain things were never recorded. To dwell with ghosts is to dwell on the hinterland of what we *do* know, asking not only *why* the shadow, but to what effect and to what extent; it is to ask who is wounded and to wonder why, to notice who is saved. After that, and perhaps most importantly to this study, it is to then ask, "What now," imagining from this a way of carrying on.

The body of this study is segmented into three spatial performances, or "sites of convergence" that each consider specific archives pertaining to the Prince House. In each section I deal explicitly with an arc of performance that begins with presence and moves into absence, suggesting and rehearsing different kinds of death that (could) exist in between. As Diana Taylor points out, history as a discipline cannot, on its own,

legitimate the unrecorded event. It simply is not equipped to deal with these spaces of indeterminacy. This crisis of interpretation and analysis, Taylor argues “is where performance studies, as a post-disciplinary methodology, comes in – illuminating that disciplinary blind-spot that history cannot reach on its own” (71). By placing this performative analysis of specific blind-spots in history within Taylor’s articulation of the capacities and potentials of performance, I aim to take up the question Phelan asks in *Mourning Sex*: “what kind of body remains after death?” (18) Burrowing into this question I aim to draw what remains I find closer to me, embodying the trauma of what has been erased, painting these pages red with the invisible violence through which their forms were made to vanish.

Rehearsing the Archives

Site#1: Archive of local history convergence

The first site this study will examine is the local history of the Prince House before it was relocated to Heritage Park, re-iterating the details of its recorded past within the narrative of Calgary and Western Canada. The Prince House is made of brick and wood and sandstone. It was constructed in 1894 in the Eau Claire district of Calgary, and although it is not currently planted on the land on which it was sown, it does have a lineage and it is still standing. By delving into archival records, this is the section in which I delineate the “brute facts” of history. The fractures and fragments of recorded fact presented in this section are incomplete and sometimes contradictory. “As an epistemic lens focused on the past,” Taylor argues, “history has constituted itself as a powerful ideological apparatus capable of illuminating certain events and disappearing

others” (70-71). Often large gaps begin to form and certain areas are entirely obscured by shadow. In no single document can a comprehensive history of the Prince House, or the people who lived there, be found - and it is emphatically not my purpose to generate such a document. Rather, by underscoring the disjointed and incomplete and sometimes incompatible nature of archival records pertaining to the Prince House, it is my intention to highlight the insecure and tenuous ways we weave historical narrative. If this study were a body, this section would comprise an assortment of bones from which a skeleton might conceivably be made. Yet this bundle withholds more than it delivers and bones can only ever promise the barest of blueprints. Thus, this section writes within Phelan’s hypothesis that “the affective outline of what we’ve lost might bring us closer to the bodies we want to touch more than the restored illustration can” (3). By withholding affective detail and personally touching narrative, this section anticipates through what it withholds that which is to come, which is an archive of fantasy: the beguiling *pentimento* of the living history village.

Site #2: Archive of Fantasy

In 1967, the Prince House was entirely dismantled and removed from its original location at the intersection of 4th Avenue and 2nd Street SW to Heritage Park Historical Village. For this to happen, 25,000 bricks were systematically removed and numbered and the house dissected into three parts. A false foundation was dug at Heritage Park and the house re-planted on spacious grounds now lined with tall trees. In this section I engage the Prince House through Scott Magelssen’s work on living history villages, which he describes as cultural institutions that merge historical exhibits with live costumed performance. While unique and vitally important, Magelssen points out that

they often compromise historical accuracy and authenticity for the sake of tourism and entertainment value. But my purpose in this section is not to enter into discussion over the historical accuracy of Heritage Park's interpretive practices. Instead, I draw attention to the Prince House in the context of Heritage Park and offer an exploration of a very different sort of archive: an archive of fantasy and affect premised on a performance of absence executed daily. This is an archive of glamour and mystique, a mirror-lined hallway in which much is promised and more is withheld. This section picks up the thread of Phelan's musings on our relationship to the absent bodies of the past, examining her assertion that the affective hollow of these bodies (which we still want to touch) "might allow us to understand more deeply why we long to hold bodies that are gone"

(3). To continue with the analogy established in the previous section, the Prince House, as it stands within Heritage Park's archive of fantasy, is analogous to the geography of skin, replete with promise and plush with the casings of life but with no structure of its own.

Site #3: Archive of Affect

The third section of this study examines the Prince House as an archive of affect accessed through personal memory and displayed against a landscape of trauma and loss. In this section I revisit my own memories of a night I spent alone in the Prince House, describing this early attempt to understand ghosts and the spaces of liminality between existing fragments of historical "fact," fiction, urban legend and the testimony of personal feeling. This section is an intimate and tender rendering of an archive that is still deeply felt and personally wounding. Although the problematics laid out through the course of this segment are never fully resolved, I hope to present them in such a way that suggests

that between absence and presence there is a liminal space that **can** be inhabited.

Attempting to do so simply requires a specific semiotic, a specific way of *doing* research and a specific way of representing what is learned. By attending to the incomplete and troubling nature of the memories described in this section, I attempt to point to performance as a way of *opening*, while drawing our attention to the risk and promise such an act can entail. Della Pollock expresses the difficulty of writing across a vanishing line of time, suggesting a metonymic lexicon that is often “filled with longing for a lost subject/object...that has disappeared into history or time, and for what, in the face of that disappearance, may seem both the inadequacy and impossibility of evocation” (84). It is my intention in this section to speak from a centered place of fragility where “life and performance intersect as dying, as disappearance” (Ibid). Filled with longing for the lost subject, the body (my body) sacrifices something of herself to substitute for what cannot be had – the fulfillment of desire and the corporeal rendering of affect. This segment, were it to be likened to a feature of the body would be the animating feature, described as desire – the will to iterate, reiterate and repeatedly engage with emotion for the purpose of creating and reaffirming identity, place and be-longing.

Archiving Convergence

Every so often, throughout the process of composing this project, I found myself launching into tempestuous and obsessive reading sessions, picking my way through a small coterie of books, articles and online journals, frenetically leafing through them over and over, flinging them away from me, paging restlessly through the next - and so on.

The second chapter of this study traces the trajectory of my journey through the arguments, questions and poetics of other writers, coming at last to the moment in which

I seized upon my own. Never has any journey seemed to matter so much. During the course of one such foray, I stumbled into a passage within Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever*. "The word 'acts' can designate here at once the content of what is to be archived *and* the archive itself, the archivable and the archiving of the archive: the printed and the printing of impression" (16) declares an underlined passage at the top of page sixteen, establishing by itself, an argument I had once seen, underlined and subsequently forgotten. "The archivization produces as much as it records the event" (17) answers an underlined phrase on the top of the page opposite, likewise noted and similarly forgotten. Into the clean surface of this argument I had, at some point, scrawled an interference in pencil: "(As a thing) the past would exist without the archive," I had written, "and pertaining to our 'knowing' of the past *through* the archive, this is impossible. We can know only the archive." I think that at the time, I was trying to remind myself of the role I have played, since the start, in the creation of this thesis that is in many ways, the performance of yet another kind of archive - one that is explicitly and deeply personal. This notation was my effort to remember my own locality in relation to *the* past, much of which is implicated within my own past, which *is* lost, which I do sometimes *long* for. "Only the inflated self-aggrandizement of my therapeutic consciousness could assume that the past was gone because I thought it was" (35), Shannon Jackson says about the history of the Hull House, a subject upon which she has written a great deal. Jackson's interaction with the histories sheltered within the various archives of the Hull House, and the people it touched, is a drier contact than my own. "My sense of its now-absentness is not constituted by a memory of its once-presentness" (Ibid), she explains, and I find myself intrigued by her desire to explicate what is essentially a personally felt *lack* of

desire. This desire captivates me because it is so remarkably opposite to my own. Instead of finding her own desire implicated in her treatment of a past she never knew, or felt compelled to touch, Jackson confesses to a historiographical moment that witnesses her “caught red-handed...holding onto a body without ever having reached for it” (35). This statement of Jackson’s anticipates my own relationship to the subject of my research. However, instead of finding myself holding even the barest outline of a human form, over and over I find myself clutching at air that still stirs in the wake of human movement. So anxious to touch my fingers to living skin, I confess to often finding myself caught in a web of my own desire, trying to embody both presence and absence – trying to make my own body *do* both things.

In preliminary drafts of this project, I spoke and wrote of the Prince House’s “lady in white” often. In these early essays and presentations, I described her as the mark of the absent presence, situating her as my reflection, my opposite more perfect self. This articulation echoed another of Derrida’s works, *Of Grammatology*. I found this description elegant and in some ways I think I fell in love with the obfuscation enabled by my own use of co-opted language. Yet this description lacked the raw verisimilitude demanded by effective performative writing. I had felt safe within this lovely semantic container because it sheltered me completely and yet, though it was lovely (*is* lovely), it failed to fool anyone. Through the process of refining this project, I gave a draft to a colleague to edit. It came back to me in pieces, cut open and exposed. Scrawled in the margins of the paragraph in which I had, so tenderly, placed the fragile semantic object, “the mark of the always already absent present, the more perfect image of myself in negative,” there were some slash-marks and a query: “You wanted to be the ghost in

some sense?” My colleague asked. “You wanted to embody that absence?” As I looked down at the page, appreciating with my fingers and eyes the interference of this poetic graffiti in the surface of my typed block of text, I realized that he was exactly right and that somehow, my friend had seized on the crux of this study in a way I had been unable to articulate. He had pierced right through the container I had hoped would shelter me and he had found me there. I flushed. I felt embarrassed. This insight, which I encountered by chance in the chaotic hours after a workshop session, anticipates my objective to explore my own disruption into the many Prince Houses existing inside, as well as outside, the archives described above.

Throughout this project, I consider Derrida’s notion of archival violence in the specific context of the Prince House and the women who inhabited it in turn. Their absence has resonated in my body since I first visited the house at Heritage Park as a child. My connection to the hollows carved out by their absent bodies captivate me, just as compelling as an act of tragic theatre. In light of their tenuous presence, I analyze my own position, situated in a place of play between four acts of dying that seem to reproduce and multiply death, shattering it like a prism, sending parts of it everywhere. With the tenderness of personal feeling I offer my interpretation of Derrida’s assertion that death is not entirely biological, nor entirely cultural. With my back against the wall I speak into the disappearance of women I never knew. As Phelan has it in the context of tragic theatre, “death is captivating because it is a copy, an act...This is a theatre that rehearses death...dramatiz[ing] the impossibility of an isolated death” (14). At the heart of this analysis is my suspicion that while in tragic theatre “no one dies singly” (Ibid), in history it is possible to never die at all. What is a ghost, I wonder, if she did in fact once

live, but in death is obscured by shadow and the violence of the archive's insistence, both on its interruption into the running stream of our lives, and its ruthless disavowal that it did no such thing? The answer must have less to do with theoretical absences and more to do with the imprint of specific women who did in fact live but whose lives and subsequent deaths (in all their woundingly touching detail) go unmarked.

In this thesis I do things with words that are not conventionally done in this type of academic treatise, which is to say that I write performatively. This break with representational writing, particularly in the third chapter of this text is a deliberate, certainly not immutable decision that was guided by the material itself. The specific absences this project seeks to point out could not have been anchored to fact or narrative, for to do so would have been to reinforce and perpetuate the very power structures this project seeks to resist. To do so would have been to obscure what is tangibly missing behind a smooth wall of dates, photographs, journal entries and other chronological methods we have for recalling and reciting the past. It is emphatically not my objective in this project to build a wall, to speak the contours of the walls that always already exist around us. Instead I point to the gaps and lines and fractures and holes that riddle the surface of history. I point to specific things that (perhaps) are in the process of spilling out from between the cracks. It is important to note that this thesis takes on fragments of histories pertaining to specific women who did once live. It speaks about absence and deals with this concept theoretically but always mindfully that in many cases these absences are concrete – a specific body in an unmarked grave for example, the absence of a headstone, the absence of an inscription of dates and a particular name. Furthermore, this thesis takes on a biography of memories that are gendered and personal, seeking to

re-inhabit and evoke without colonizing these traces with (yet more) interpretive analysis. This is not a dismissal of traditional scholarly forms but rather, in an attempt that is markedly subjective, hopes to reach beyond the constraints of a more conventionally rendered analysis. The trick of the archive is to be as smooth and clear as glass. It is my aim in this project to come to an understanding of what the casualties of this patina are, and how rooted these casualties are to gendered, everyday features of power and politics.

CHAPTER 2

ORIGINS: PERFORMANCE AND THE PAST

This project has its origins in two places that at first seemed far away – far away from each other, far away from me. At first I dwelled in each place separately, moving restlessly between them, torn between each, wanting them both but thinking I would have to cut one loose. This oscillation was painful, the feeling of being pulled back and forth between two bodies of work. The back-and-forth push and pull continued until, finally, I looked down and noticed that the threads pulled from the center of each were converging and knitting themselves together. While my intellect had been busy with scissors and knives, trying to parse thoughts and questions into isolated, hermetically sealed sections, my fingers had been hard at work. Instead of cutting out neat figures and shapes, I had caught myself, red-handed, braiding strands together. As the pattern my hands were weaving emerged, I noticed that it looked and felt familiar. This is because my subjectivities and inner worlds had somehow, unbeknownst to me, seeped out through my fingers and made their way into the warp and weft of the design. My memories and closely held impressions, the imprint of affect and feeling, my many subjectivities and identifications had overflowed, spilled out in colour and were all around me. I was surrounded. This excess of identification brings to mind Diana Taylor's description of her own embodied subjectivities, pleasures, pressures and signifiers – how as a young woman awash in two different cultures, she found herself identifying with everything, rather than with nothing. The implication of the body in this surplus of identification, and the embodiment of subjectivity pointed Taylor to performance, which she states

functions “as an episteme, a way of knowing, not simply an object of analysis” (xvi). As I consider the contours of my own experience over the course of my project, this statement of Taylor’s resonates. The first site of origin, the place where this, my own journey began, is performance, which I now define as the ephemeral traces of movement that mark what we are, what we do, how we perpetuate ourselves, how we *carry on*; how we transmit knowledge and enact ourselves, how we make the world make sense – how we make sense of ourselves in the world. As Taylor so aptly points out, performance carries an additional quality that is both personally and academically important, to Taylor and to me. Politically, performance is the way that the non-powerful claim social memory and identity. It is a statement of selfhood and a claim on cultural identity and “there-ness” in a system of Western ideology in which “writing has become the guarantor of existence itself” (xix).

I am captivated by these words of Taylor’s, at the power and potential they hold and convey. The landscape of performance has, from the start, seemed beautiful to me. Yet, the language of gesture and the theory of identity and description, politics, resistance and the metaphorical capacities of theatre and the stage at first seemed to resist me. The smooth containers responsible for holding these powerful and wonderful ideas would not let me in. Exiled, I could only appreciate the topography from far away. At the same time, I became captivated with the past. Not the sleek, tungstenite line of its linear trajectory out of the darkness towards us, but the messy, everyday ways in which it ghosts the present, the way it shadows our presence, the way it dogs our footsteps. From the very first, I have instinctively resisted notions of the past constructed by empirical discourse and predicated on what Michel de Certeau calls “a differentiation between the

present and the *past*...that takes for granted a rift between *discourse* and the *body*...that forces the silent body to speak (3, emphasis in original). Instead I have been plagued since childhood by the notion that the past never went away, that it has been creeping forward silently like children in a game, reaching its hand forward, trying to touch us before we turn around and catch it. This touch has seemed to me to be a killing touch and for a long time I was afraid of it, felt surrounded by the menacing forms of ghosts. Meanwhile, my concept of time and the locality of history was one that I felt confident I could fool. Visiting historical sites, castles and estates and forts and homesteads with my family, I was sure that if I could only be allowed to put on one of the antique dresses suspended behind glass, I could escape the present by slipping into the past, could embody the past, enact the past, *be* the past.

The past, to me, has never been a “foreign country” (Lowenthal 1985) and when, as a first-year graduate student, my intellectual wanderings led me to de Certeau’s famous essay, “Walking in the City,” I found myself confronted by a crisis of past and present converging that, ultimately, gave my fingers the skill to begin their weaving, my hands the inspiration to draw a design that in time became this study. This movement, this beginning, unravelled out of a phrase tucked into the middle of de Certeau’s essay and as I read it, I felt time begin to swirl and swirl. “Haunted places are the only ones people can live in” (68) de Certeau said, and I felt that he was speaking directly into the space of confusion I felt between history and performance, between my notion of ghosts as the invisible presence of things that refused to go away, and the implication of my own subjective and embodied awareness of the effect this has on the way we have constructed and secured both “the present” and “the future.” Place, and the way in which meaning is

constructed by bodies moving through place, are immediately implicated. My body (that is present) and the vanished bodies of the dead (bodies that are gone) are suggested in a moment of touch that seems real - my own survival, contingent upon the touch of ghosts. I felt breathless. Yet, in de Certeau's articulation of our relationship to these spectres (the touch I had so feared), there is a symbiosis that is suggestive, and this symbiosis presented me with an opening. At last, I found my way in to discourses of the past and my own (embodied) interaction with the way meaning is found there. Here is the touch I felt but could not speak – and within this touch, and the ways it makes people/makes sense, here is the overlap between performance (gesture, the body and the legacy of identity) and the past (the suggestion that the residue of this gesture remains in the air). The smooth containers that I once felt had held the power of performance away from me, cracked open. Words overflowed and spilled over. The language of gesture and the feeling, movement and breath of these conversations, questions and postulates rushed towards me. I felt touched and stained by colour. I felt invited, implicated, looked at, responsible. Most of all, I felt excitement and energy and the tug to write into disappearance and vanishing – the notion that the past is dead and lost forever, and into a convergence with what is not immediately visible (which, in my mind, I called “ghosts”), moving, in the words of Della Pollock, “from a representation of loss – history – to an *enactment* of loss – an admission that the story of present absence cannot be sustained” (84).

Of Innocence and Absence

My first interpretation of de Certeau's phrase was a theoretical engagement with haunting that focused on the binary opposites of “presence” and “absence.” Somewhere

within this difference, I sensed an answer that, once discovered, would enable me to find meaning and do work in/with haunted places. The first problem I encountered had to do with the paradoxical construction of an absence that, although absent, can somehow be discerned. If we see/sense an absence, it must, therefore, be present – else how could we have seen it. Yet, if it is present – as evidenced by our discernment of it, it cannot be absent. I looked around me and found that I had become marooned in language. I panicked. I wanted out. And so I pursued this paradox through other people's scholarship, arriving at Derrida's 1967 work *Of Grammatology*, in which he describes "the mark of the absence of presence; an always already absent present" (xvii). This process, by which we do not feel the presence of a thing through a sign but, through the absence of other presences, we guess what it is (Ibid), to me, spoke the word "haunting" out loud in a way that was *almost* productive. What Derrida suggests is that between absence and presence, there is a liminal space evidenced by trace. It is through trace that we see the presence of absences and it is this notion of trace that destabilizes the (false) binarisms of presence and absence, showing this opposition to be untenable. Unravelling Derrida's complex language, I began to realize that rather than looking at the spaces *between* the observable, I had focused on the features of the observed. I had described the landscape, and had defined what was missing as opposite to what was present. This chauvinistic way of articulating absence (the past, the vanished, the ghosts) privileged my own corporeality, my own body and my own temporality by positioning what was absent as my own/our own opposite. The easy, earnest and almost righteous way I had, in the words of de Certeau (in the introduction to *The Writing of History*) "assumed a gap to exist between the silent opacity of the 'reality' that it seeks to express and the place

where it produces its own speech, protected by the distance established between itself and its object” (3) exposed my writing as glib and naive - trite. The way that I had allowed high theory to occlude my ability to “see” my own place in the power structures of the everyday was sobering. Somewhere above me I heard the softest rustle of violence. After grappling with notions of haunting, and then with Derrida’s turgid articulation of opposites and trace, the excitement of discovery that had prompted the project forward seemed stalled and I came to realize two things. The first is that, on its own, theory is limiting, isolating, alienating. Instead, discussions of structures of power and politics (what is remembered in contrast with what is not) needs to be grounded in the world. I began to search for a case study. The second insight I experienced is that absence and presence are not the passive outcomes of phenomenon. Absences are there because they are perpetuated. Presence is there because it is articulated. So, with the suspicion that absences are *not* innocent, nor defined through what they are, not, and the desire to ground this hypothesis in a space of convergence between my own experience/my own past and a socially constructed and culturally perpetuated use of history, I found my way (back) to Heritage Park Historical Village. From a personal perspective, this living history park is a place-marker of my past. I visited it often with my family as a young child. After graduating from university, Heritage Park is also the place at which I worked my first, full-time “professional” job, as the park’s Public Relations and Communications Specialist. Also of vital importance to me is the fact that I once spent a night, alone, in Heritage Park’s most notorious exhibit, the Prince House, trying to touch the skin of ghosts. This experience, which took place some six years ago, is evidence of my desire for this touch – proof of the way it has always, already been with me.

Using Heritage: Living History Villages, Cultural Memory, the Past

The living history village is a space of contradictions and indeterminacy. In an effort to focus my analysis of this landscape of smoke and mirrors, and to understand the larger structures of socially perpetuated power and politics pertaining to history and memory, I turned to Scott Magelssen's 2006 monograph *Living History Villages: Undoing History through Performance*. In this treatise, Magelssen offers an exploration of the links between living history and performance, and offers an analysis of the performative, interpretive practices through which the living history village interfaces with the public. Magelssen's analysis hints at, but does not directly address, the structures of politics and economics at play within living history villages and, because I sensed their presence, I felt the need to see these structures explicitly addressed. I turned, therefore, to the work of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, specifically *Afterlives* and *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*. Among Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's most salient observations (the most pertinent to my study) is her statement that "while tourist attractions may seem like oases out of time, they are implicated in a larger political economy of transnational flows of money, people, and symbolic capital" (*Afterlives* 4). This observation is important because it underscores the fact that living history villages are part of the larger capitalist machinery (the underpinnings of Western society) propelled forward by the principles of supply and demand. Although the product the living history village sells is marketed as true and pure history, it is, nonetheless, a product created with the specific and explicit intent to be sold. This notion underscores Joseph Roach's argument that, as a system of perpetuated behaviours and occasions for memory and invention, "cities of the dead are primarily for the living" (xi). As sites of

memory, living history museums are motivated by the needs and desires of those in the present. This postulate is important and the ripples of this implication are widespread, can be observed throughout work in the humanities and social sciences¹. The work of Pierre Nora, in particular, in his distinction between real sites of memory (*milieux de mémoire*) and artificial sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) suggests that there is a violence buried deep inside what he calls our “will to remember” (14). Yet, though I sensed this, though I felt the presence of a dark bruise, a tender place of hurt under Nora’s words, I was unable to articulate what this space suggested – what it implied. Instead I simply marked this feeling and moved forward, returning much later, almost at the end, just in time, and I marked this space with all the colour and breath of performance, with the pain of personal loss and suggested impression of touch on the skin of specific (absent) women.

As my research unfolded, my conceptualization of ghosts began to shift, moving further away from the vague and romantic articulation of absence and silence, away from my impression of an almost perfect version of what I felt was lacking in my present and towards a focused description of specific people. Simultaneously, I deepened my research into the Prince House, studying the house in contexts other than Heritage

¹ Pierre Nora, in his treatise on sites of memory and the ways society (namely French society) views, understands and uses the past; Benedict Anderson (1983) and Edward Said (1982) implicate the use of memory in the formation and perpetuation of the nation/nation state; Paul Connerton in his 1983 work, *How Societies Remember*, introduced me to the machinations of collective memory while his later publication, *How Modernity Forgets* (2009), presents an elegant exegesis on the relationship we, in the present, have with our own past and the anxiety we feel over its slippage into post-modernity, into vanishing. This body of work provided me with the lexicon and confidence to move forward with my analysis of what I increasingly came to feel is a modern phenomenon predicated on fear of death and the anxiety of being cast adrift with no material manifestation of a collective identity to which to refer.

Park. In so doing, I began to uncover traces of individuals, women, who I felt had long been present in my own history and experience, and in the history of the Prince House. These women resonated with my desire for history. I was hooked. I first encountered the names of Peter Prince's four wives in a self-published anthology of ghost stories written by the wives of two of Heritage Park's board members, Sally Tunney and Donna Jennings. Entitled *Ghost Stories of Heritage Park*, the slim, soft-cover book resembles a brochure, stapled twice along the spine. Inside are black and white renderings of many of the park's exhibits, gothic looking ladies in white dresses: melodrama in pen and ink. References to this publication elicit cringes among park interpreters and staff and when I worked at the Park we gave the brochure away at trade shows along with the Heritage Park Fall Fair cookbook. As an historical document, this compilation of spooky stories is dismissed outright. Yet the research is sound, stunningly comprehensive, and carefully transcribed. Verifying the excerpts of obituaries, including that of Marguerite Corrigan in 1898, Emma Douglas in 1902, Rosa Douglas in 1907, and Emily Whitlock in 1944, I discovered that not only are the dates and quotations accurate, this volume proved to be the only place in which the names of Peter Prince's wives are listed correctly. The authors also took note of inconsistencies surrounding the historical documentation of these women. "According to the Daily Herald," they note, "Emma Wallin was forty-six when she died, but her headstone in the Union Cemetery states that she was forty-seven" (14). I admire Jennings and Tunney's use of the conjunction *but*. I am proud that they did not soften this (discouraging) lack of alignment with words like *however* or *although*. This small distinction is important and provided me with my first hint at a specific kind of archival interference. Of similar interest is a short phrase on the adjacent page, this

time about the death and burial of Rosa Douglas. “The headstone that she shares with Emma declares her age to be fifty-five” (15), Jennings and Tunney state. As I read and re-read this phrase, I wondered if I detect irony. Are the authors implying that archived fact and “truth” are different things? They do not tell us Rosa Douglas was fifty-five at the time of her death. Instead they distance themselves from this “fact,” performing instead an act of *reiteration*, making explicit their unwillingness (for whatever reason) to share ownership of this fact. It is here that I begin to sense that perhaps these women historians have been underestimated. As my research continued, I noted that Jennings and Tunney’s publication is also the only resource that provides a transcription of reports of haunting connected to the Prince House, even though the house is rife with these tales. Indeed, Jennings and Tunney appear to be the only people with interest enough to write such things down. As a result, they are laughed at and dismissed as dilettante housewives, *amateurs*. History is a precarious subject that is in many ways privileged, and drawing attention to the murky (gendered) landscape of the unsaid is often the sort of pursuit that is dismissed as amateur scholarship, inferior scholarship, *fiction*. I am protective of Tunney and Jennings and the book they wrote together about ghosts. Their earnest reiteration of historical fact interspersed with gothically phrased, eager descriptions of ghostly encounters (the words “ghostly encounters” and “evidence” appear in the same sentence on page 17) conjures an image of history that suggests that the past is like a film reel that can be stopped and interacted with. The sites of interactions Jennings and Tunney recite, between ghost and non-ghost, are depicted as locations of trauma and hint at a crisis of time that is idealistic and confidently simplistic – which is exactly why I love this book so deeply. It is the type of book one could read to

a child, for although the content is frightening, it does not touch core notions of time and place in a way that destabilizes or threatens anything important. After feeling afraid the child could curl herself up and sleep – thrilled and enchanted, dreaming of silent women in swirling gowns. “Strange episodes...fuelled the stories that Emma, the second Mrs. Prince, had been confined to the third floor of the house because of her tubercular condition” (17), the authors begin and I imagine the child shiver. “This led to rumours that the third floor was haunted by her ghost” (20), they continue and the child sits still, attentive, feels the suggestion of touch but is protected from trauma by words like *rumours*, *stories*, which hold the terror of a personal encounter away from her. “Many people claim to have encountered a mysterious lady in white at the Prince House,” (17) they say. Objects have been witnessed, moving through the air, lights inexplicably switched on, guard dogs paralyzed with fear, a woman in white is seen rocking a baby, appears at the window, is captured (almost) in photographs sent to the local paper – the child is wide-eyed but she is safe. The idea of *almost* has saved her.

In Jennings and Tunney’s descriptions of “ghostly encounters” (17), history is made to stand still. We in the present (who *are* moving) converge with a perfectly preserved image of the past and interact with it, witness it, re-act to it - trauma ensues. Hearts beat fast, throats tighten, we are *scared*. Most importantly, by engaging in a project aimed at cataloguing reports of haunting and ghostly encounters connected to the exhibits of Heritage Park, Jennings and Tunney suggest that the experience of seeing ghosts, being together with them in time, is akin to an act of witness. Ghosts are cast as silences and victims of some form of trauma, even if this trauma is only the fact that they have passed through death. Seeing ghosts, citing the word or idea of ghosts, is already an

acknowledgement that these silences exist, that that trauma occurred and (most importantly) that it *continues through time*. I find the scripted interactions between past and present put forth by Jennings and Tunney tremendously engaging. I am intrigued by their haphazard blending of “scientific” historical narrative with the mysterious and untamed iterations of the everyday, the things that are felt and are proven only through this invisible, non-replicable, touch. This blend evokes liminality, echoes the subject matter it so seriously takes on and in a way, I view Jennings and Tunney’s rendition of ghosts as a sort of haunting in its own right – the haunting of scientific historical discourse in the everyday, or possibly the reverse: the spectres of the unexplained, the personally *felt*, in a document that is, largely, a direct reference to archived, historical “fact.” Furthermore, in their invocation of historical trauma, of converging with the traumatic site of history in what can only be described as the witnessing of historical silence, call to attention that which is unsaid, that which lies beyond the site of the traumatic “past,” behind the outline of the absence that is witnessed – which is power. No wonder, I think to myself, do the historians of Heritage Park resist the Prince House ghost so emphatically. *She* (understood as the recognition of the presence of silence) is the personally touched, the personally felt, reminder that although strings that have been cut, the outlines of bodies are still imprinted in the air, if one chooses to notice them. This choice implicates everyone and suggests that the desire to see only what is spoken rests largely on the desire of the beholder. The choice to witness, or not to witness, exists for us all. However, if we accept Bonnie Smith’s idea that history is not about locations of trauma as much as it is about sites of power (231), then we escape the notion, iterated by Jennings and Tunney that ghosts are the result of traumatic encounters between the

active present and the static past. By rejecting this (comforting, familiar) construct, we arrive at a place of indeterminacy in which the past is still (always, already) unfolding – already *being* unfolded. This notion of indeterminacy remains thematic throughout this study, and the touch I felt in the pages of Jennings and Tunney’s book, the attachments I sensed these writers had formed for the women whose pasts they so confidently recite, inspired my own engagement, made me think about time in a different way – one that allows the potential for convergence.

Jennings and Tunney’s book on the ghosts of Heritage Park is particularly compelling in light of Smith’s work on gender and the writing of history. Simply stated, her argument is that the practices of history, even the discipline’s very definition, has been shaped by gender (1). Smith’s project undertakes a *resurrection* of a neglected body of amateur history written by women. Smith argues that this *corpus alieno* of historical writing, deemed trivial by male professionals, holds important lessons for our understanding of history today. As I think about the ways in which Jennings and Tunney’s writing of history has been so relentlessly dismissed, ridiculed and “written off” as the work of amateurs, I feel the word *violence* begin to surface in my mind – manifesting itself, nesting in the new anger I feel towards a discipline in which power hides behind words like “science,” “fact,” “objectivity” and “professional rigor.” In a conversation with a colleague I once referred to Jennings and Tunney’s book as a scrapbooking project, and she agreed - a gesture of kindness bestowed by the fundraising department of Heritage Park to maintain friendly relations with the wives of two of the Park’s most generous donors. The historical department sighed and looked the other way. I remember rolling my eyes. These memories came quickly, each rolling in on the

heels of the one before, and I felt undone. This feeling of complicity in an oppressive intellectual regime I had never even noticed, made me want to talk about power and politics, about the purposeful suppression of some histories in preference of others, what Taylor calls “the system of selection” (69). I wanted to look again at ghosts, wanted to redefine my terms.

It was in this state of anxiety, confusion and chagrin that I found my way to another of Derrida’s works, *Archive Fever*. Although, again, I came to this work late in the process, Derrida’s articulation of the duplicitous nature of the archive, and our relationship to archives (with archives, through archives, in and out of archives) has become the hard center around which this study has been wound, woven, stretched and hung. *Archival violence, death drive, fever, pathology*, whispered voices as they seeped out from between Derrida’s dense phrasing. Yet compelling as it is, this book, published from a lecture delivered in London in 1994, is difficult and tense. In speaking about “the origin,” Derrida refuses to give the book an origin and instead he seems to begin in the middle of the air, hanging his reader on the end of a string of definitions and epistemology that, just as I found myself frantically scrambling to the top, he snips with a deft flick of the wrist. A great deal of the work undertaken over the course of this project was spent in an effort to make the mystical pronouncements of Derrida, articulated in this slender, sinister (though beautiful) volume make sense. I *felt* Derrida’s words long before I understood them, could do work with them. Once again, I was compelled to turn to the work of others before I was eventually able to make Derrida’s words become themselves, to unfurl this “becoming” within the pages of this thesis.

Archives, Violence

Derrida begins *Archive Fever* with the assertion that the archive is contained both in its connotation as a site of origin (the place we begin) and the authority by which/through which this origin is named - which is straightforward, which makes sense. Next, Derrida points out the convergence of locality with these terms. The *place* in which the physical archive is housed is important, he tells us. Derrida's description of the archive bespeaks power, and this was good – perfectly suited to my purpose and tremendously exciting. However in his articulation of what he terms the “death drive,” I felt myself falter. Similarly the notion of archival violence itself, which Derrida says “devours in advance its own archive” (10), eluded my attempts at precise touch, left me with impressions I could not articulate. What *is* archive fever? I wanted to ask. What does it look like? Why *fever*? How does fever implicate death and violence, what do these things have to do with desire? How are origins implicated? Power seemed to underscore everything, yet I could not discern its design. Things looked messy; signifiers seemed to hover indifferently above me. I felt trapped.

In her book *Dust*, Carolyn Steedman intercepts Derrida's work on archive fever and, by holding it still and describing its features, enabled me to move forward with a sharpened focus and a concise description of my optic – much of which turned out to be contained within Derrida's construction of the death drive, but is certainly deeply coloured by his articulation of origin and authority. Steedman's work helped me to clarify these previously elusive concepts as well as providing insight into the title of Derrida's work, *Archive Fever*, which according to Steedman, articulates “a kind of sickness unto death *for* the archive...not so much to enter it and to use it, as to *have* it, or

just to have it be there, in the first place” (2, emphasis in original). According to Steedman, and this is of vital importance, the archive is inflated by Derrida to mean “power itself ... rather than those quietly folded and filed documents that we think provide the mere and incomplete record of some of its inaugural moments ” (Ibid). This notion is expanded upon in the third chapter of this thesis and provides entry into the concept of “archive” around which I have organized this study. The (compulsive, pathological) drive for origins indicates/is the same desire to recover moments of inception, beginnings and origins, which, as Steedman argues “in a deluded way, we think might be some kind of truth” (3). This endeavour, this *fevered* search for lost moments of inception and beginnings is emphatically impossible and is thus described by Derrida as a drive towards death. In her work on heritage, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett voices an almost identical observation in the context of the preservation of heritage, noting that the concept of heritage already signifies death, “whether actual or imminent” (*Afterlives* 4). Heritage as a term and concept “endows the dead and dying with a second life, an *afterlife*, through the instrumentalities of exhibition and performance. It is in this sense that heritage produces a ‘resurrection theatre’” (4, emphasis in original). Thus, the search for origins, the activity of preserving heritage, is an impossible act that immediately, at the point of its inception, foreshadows its own death – which seems tidy but for one omission. This construct (predicated on highlighting absence), once shown to be untenable, even it were to *go away* would still leave an absence in its wake. There is no way for us to escape this and I could not escape the impression of being abandoned by Derrida in a time of need. I felt myself pulled back towards *Of Grammatology* and the comforting definition of ghost (absence) as the always already absent presence. This

circularity seemed unfair and so I resisted, and took refuge in Steedman's assertion that "if we find absence, that nothing is not nothing, but is rather the space left by what is gone: the emptiness indicates how once it was filled and animated"(11). The optimistic desire this phrase evokes, to dwell in a space which is simultaneously overflowing and vacant and to find meaning there is, of course, the perfect segue into performance, listed earlier as one of the deep spaces of beginnings from which this project sprang.

Performance and History

Performance and history, representation and the past: initially I conceptualized these words as discreet bodies of work, isolated masses comprised of ideas, trajectories of thought and avenues of questioning. I attributed adjectives to both, envisioned them painted with colour. At first I could only talk about them in turn, never at once. Next, I pictured two selves, circling around each other, marking the circularity of this path with swatches of text – but never touch. I sensed connection – I was *told* there was connection. "Performance draws from history its practical, analytical, critical and theoretical capacity to make history exceed itself, to become itself even as it rages past the present into the future" (2), Della Pollock states. This articulation of excitement and personally felt convergence moved and inspired me; however it also puzzled me. Pragmatically speaking, how can performance draw anything from history – how can one imaginary draw agency from another? I pursued this line of inquiry through the works of performance studies scholars like Diana Taylor, Peggy Phelan, Shannon Jackson and Joseph Roach, chasing this connection, this imbrication of performance and the past. Over the course of this exploration, the question I had sought to answer shattered and splintered into two parts. Like cutting off the head of the hydra, I now confronted the

menace of two unknowns. The second source of puzzlement (the monster's second head) concerned representation. How does one set out to write *about* the past without writing the past, I wondered. How does one re-present what has gone, through language, in a way that, in the words of Pollock, "resists the urge to fetishize the visible fact?" (10). The concept of "true" representation is, at best, ironic, offering a mimetic representation of history that merely "becomes what it shows" (Ibid). This leaves simulation and the hyperreal, the terrain of Umberto Eco and Jean Baudrillard. Yet simulations are no more solid, no more corporeal. According to Baudrillard, through this "confusion of fact with its model" (217), history has so exceeded itself that it begins to disappear, until history, through its lack of finality and meaning, disappears. This landscape of loss leads Pollock to ask: "how do we make history go, when it seems to be going away?" (16). Pollock's question, in turn, makes me ask: how can performance claim agency from an actor in a state of such crisis? And even more pressingly, if history goes away, taking action and agency with it and leaves us "atomized in time, less real than facts" (15), what does this mean for performance? I envisioned blackness, like the absence of light that follows the collapse of a star, nothingness.

To address this crisis, I returned to Pollock's initial statement, that "performance draws from history its practical, analytical, critical and theoretical capacity to make history exceed itself, to become itself even as it rages past the present into the future" (2). In order to make this expression "go" I found myself impelled to turn it in upon itself. What if instead, history draws its inertia from performance and from its energy and capacities, thresholds and potentials, becomes itself? Performance, after all, lives in all three temporalities at once, is conceived in the past and perhaps is tied to practices that

still dwell there – that do not dwell in the present – and enacted in the present, enacted in the hope of reaching the future and of continuing, of being witnessed, of witnessing. *Rehearsal* as an idea and an act is predicated on the belief, naive, optimistic, perhaps pessimistic, perhaps at times despairing, that there will be an “*and then.*” This is the insight I followed from Taylor’s articulation of the repertoire, which she describes as “the activated *now* of performance, the performed *past* of history” (68, emphasis in original) and “nonarchival systems of transfer” (xvii), into the words of Roach who articulates the same phenomenon, calling it “vortices of behaviour” (26). Performance, then, is not simply one of the ways the past travels: it is the mode of transportation that allows the past to elude the authority of the archive and the structures of power and politics hiding their shadows beneath the words “historical fact.” According to Taylor, “performance makes visible...that which is always already there...These spectres, made manifest through performance, alter future phantoms, future fantasies” (64). This notion of time travel recalls the image of the past sneaking invisibly forward, reaching its hand towards me. This contact is so soft I scarcely feel its impression on my skin. Yet it happens. This study is the expression, my most eloquent persuasion, that it does happen.

Writing Touch

Phelan begins the introduction to her book *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* with what she describes as a fairy tale. This allegory of language evokes feeling by exceeding conventions of critical discourse and instead offering poetics, the expression of subjectivities and the description of trauma – personally felt and wounding. *Mourning Sex* is a book about performance but it is also performative, which is to say that it is difficult, discloses inner worlds, destabilizes. Phelan’s subject in this book is the

body, and so she writes a body, writes her own body, offers images and words that implicate her reader's body, and in this way her work can be felt. The strategy is not innocent. It stems from desire (to be heard, seen, *felt*, to be empathized with) and is articulated from a suspicion that, in Phelan's words, "the affective outline of what we've lost might bring us closer to the bodies we want to touch more than the restored illustration can" (3). Phelan's work centers on this loss, this space of absence where once there was something. Her words transmit her fingertips to this place of vanishing and her yearning conveys a touch that exceeds critical discourse, though this component of Phelan's work is excellent. Performative writing, exemplified by Phelan, leaves nowhere for the author/artist/researcher to hide. It demands disclosure, demands to be messy and anxious. It is difficult to do this well. From the perspective of a novice, my perspective, there are traps and pits and trip-wires everywhere. Language becomes different, though it demands obedience to the same laws; pages become canvass, though they are still pages as well. Punctuation can become so many things while bodies, absences, fractures and imaginaries can (potentially) be re-membered. According to Pollock, performative writing begins in a place of such "cynical pleasure, sometimes ... abject horror" (73) that (again) in her words, "what is there to do but write" (73). These phrases are drawn from an essay entitled "Performing Writing" and for a long time, I studied this essay as though it was my own Rosetta stone, my own way *in* to a writing practice in which I saw tremendous potential. In Pollock's words, performative writing is "to write in excess of norms of scholarly representation...into what might be called social mortalities, to make writing/textuality speak to, of, and through pleasure, possibility, disappearance, and even pain" (79), which, of course, was my objective exactly. The answer to my questions

concerning representation turned out not to be easy. Throughout the remainder of Pollock's essay, I discovered that effective performative writing (should) aim to *be* six things: evocative, metonymic, subjective, citational, nervous and consequential. And, although these words are simple, the practice of their expression was/is not. I poured over Pollock's essay. I was a mystic, a water diviner. Eventually, through the course of my perusal of performance scholarship exemplifying performative writing I encountered Rachel Hall's essay "Patty and Me: Performative Encounters between an Historical Body and the History of Images." Hall's writing, at once both critically engaging as well as personally touching and performative, provided me with an example in which the writer, rather than naming the features of good performative writing, simply *did* effective performative writing. I saw Hall everywhere through the pages of this essay. Her childhood is spoken and her adolescence is named in an iteration of personal subjectivity/scholarship that is messy and moving, that speaks into a place of yearning for a person she never met, for a time that is gone, for a convergence she can only imagine. I was captivated. As a final note on which to end this section, and a precursor for what is to follow, I reiterate the statement made earlier, that in its essence, this study is an attempt to speak into a place of loss and the violence of a certain kind of archival interference. The thresholds, capacities and potentials offered by theories of performance and performative writing practices are vital to my efforts; indeed I strongly state that this work could not have been executed any other way. Performance, predicated as it is on loss, anticipates the desire to press one's fingertips against the skin of the past, and understands perfectly the impossibility of this touch lasting.

CHAPTER 3

SITES OF CONVERGENCE

Site #1: Archive of Local History

Introduction: The Cutting Touch of Memory

This is an archive of local history that recites the story of Peter Prince and the Prince House as well as touching on the known details of the lives, deaths and subsequent disappearance of Peter Prince's four wives - the Prince House women. By delving into archival records located at the Glenbow Museum and Heritage Park Historical Village, this section outlines the "brute facts" of history, placing these narratives into the larger story-line of the city of Calgary. Often the fragments of found history located in these archives are incomplete and sometimes contradictory. Often large gaps begin to form and certain areas are entirely obscured by shadow. By underscoring the disjointed, often incomplete nature of the archived past, it is my intention to highlight the tenuous and insecure ways we weave historical discourse. There are gaps and fissures in the smooth patina of historical fact. Sometimes these spaces, when explored, lead to chasms and channels of darkness carved out by the sharp knives of power and politics. Threads are cut, figures fall – bodies fall. Names and faces and lives slide away. *Knowledge is for cutting*, whispers the air as it whistles through the cracks in the wall, *history is for cutting*. The knives are sharp. But the absent forms of bodies which are gone reverberate; silences perpetuate themselves. Whatever new understanding is reached by the deaths of these figures, established as the irrelevant features of the past, in the words of de Certeau "come back, despite everything, on the edges of discourse or in its rifts and

crannies” (*Writing History* 4). This “return of the repressed” (Ibid) *can* be touched. This section signals the beginning of this touch – doing so with fingers and breath and from the recognition that every victory over death is ephemeral. As de Certeau has it, “eventually the reaper returns and cuts his swath” (5). Eventually death returns for the remembered; in time, the forgotten re-surface.

Marked Bodies and Unmarked Remains

Peter Prince was a millwright born in Trois-Rivières, Quebec. He came to Calgary in 1886 under the direction of the North Western Lumber Company to develop the timber industry in Alberta. Prince married a woman named Marguerite Corrigan in 1856 and together they had two children, Rosanna and Peter. Marguerite died in 1898 of cancer after living for four years with Prince in the house he built in present-day Eau Claire and the only archived photograph that exists of the interior of the Prince House (before it was relocated to Heritage Park) was taken during her wake. There are flowers and wreaths in the parlour and a photograph of Marguerite stands in a tri-pod – although the photograph is obscured, her face hidden. After a suitable period of mourning, in 1900, Peter Prince married Emma Howe. Emma was a widow whose husband had been employed by Prince to drive logs down the swirling length of the Bow River into the saw mill on what is now Prince’s Island Park in the Eau Claire district of Calgary, so named by Prince after Eau Claire Wisconsin – a place he had once lived. Emma died only two years after the union, in the early hours of September 21 1902 of tuberculosis. According to urban legend, Emma is the ghost that haunts the Prince House. It is she who is said to be the lady in white, and it is her footsteps that are rumoured to sometimes be heard roaming back and forth across the second storey floor, her figure that is said to appear at

the second-storey window. According to the *Daily Herald*, she was forty-six years old at the time of her death. I wonder at this point if Prince knew she was dying when he married her. I wonder if there were signs. I suspect that she did, and so did he. Her husband had been killed in a tragic accident on the river, under the charge of Peter Prince and I wonder if this was a marriage of atonement. Or perhaps she did not know, perhaps it came upon them later, unexpected. I picture the dry prairie air, choked with dirt and dust and the closed curtains, shutting out the light. I wonder if she lit lamps at night, and maybe walked back and forth, driven to her feet, trying to breathe. I imagine what this would have looked like, the orange glow, bright against the prairie sky – the turrets swallowed by the darkness. Her shadow interrupts the yellow light, passing back and forth, back and forth, on her way to vanishing.

While Emma had been ailing, Prince had hired a woman named Rosa Douglas to act as her nurse. She lived with the family in the house, and after Emma's death, Prince married Rosa. Rosa began to decline soon after the marriage until she, too, died – two years after the wedding. Rosa and Emma Prince are buried in the Union Cemetery under a shared headstone, a stone cairn beneath two intersecting logs representing the tree of life. When Rosa began to slide into decline, Prince engaged a widow named Emily Whitlock to act as her nurse and after Rosa's death, Prince married Emily in 1909. Peter and Emily lived together with Emily's daughter Norah until Peter Prince died in 1925. His passing was marked by an extensive obituary in the city's daily paper. R.B. Bennett authored a tribute to Prince lauding his pioneering spirit and philanthropic leanings, his loyalty, business acumen and faithful service to the enterprises with which he was associated. According to his obituary Prince's lifestyles was simple, his only recreation

being shooting and walking. He did not entertain and he did not attend the social gatherings of others. Prince is interred in St. Mary's cemetery beside his first wife Marguerite and their children, Peter and Rosanna; in death the splintered family is made whole, placed intact, in the earth. Emily Whitlock died in 1944 - nineteen years after Prince and her death went largely unmarked. She is buried in the Union Cemetery, sharing a plot with Emma and Rosa. However, although her interment is recorded, her grave is unmarked – there but unnamed, present but unsaid.

The activities of Peter Prince have been comprehensively archived, memorialized on plaques throughout Prince's Island Park and through the course of this research I encountered him everywhere. The Calgary Public library possesses a collection of photographs of Prince, the lumber mill and the man himself, serious-faced in black and white. Archives at the Glenbow museum contain an exhaustive array of Prince's business correspondences as well as newspaper clippings, notes, letters and patents, work permits and contracts. Heritage Park is in possession of a small array of documents as well, mostly photographs and the floor plan of the Prince House. If Prince is the *said*, then the women he married, beginning with Marguerite, are the *unsaid* and for me, this lack of touch has been a source of frustration, sometimes indignation, fear and sadness. It was near the end of this project that it occurred to me to return to the place in which I had first felt the presence of this silence. The Prince House is an archive that has warped, shifted and changed throughout the 117 years it has stood within the city of Calgary and in its current location, at Heritage Park Historical Village, the versions of the past it has been scripted to display are complex and fantastic, ethereal. Yet the Prince House is a critical site of convergence which these women shared, which I share with them.

Marguerite Corrigan, Emma Whitlock and Rosa Douglas died there and their forms are implicated in the house's narrative and in its architecture. In many ways, I argue, these women are localized in the house; dwell in specific parts of its interior as though they were never quite able to leave. And so, I turn my attention to the house Peter Prince built, exploring it as an archive of four women married to the same man, to the ways that, through the material structure of the house, and its place and position within the local community, they are (or are not) re-membered.

Bricks and Dust

Since it was erected near the banks of the Bow River, the Prince House has been a memorable feature of Calgary's landscape. At the time of its construction the topography was flat, stretching far away into prairies and foothills. Peter Prince, the man who built the house, copied the design (almost) exactly from an 1893 issue of *Scientific American*. The sandstone was mined from a quarry outside of Calgary; the bricks are from a kiln in Red Deer. It is 3300 square feet and was built in the Queen Anne style within sight of the Eau Claire and Bow River Lumber Company sawmill. When it was first built, the Prince House was the tallest feature of the landscape, rising out of the earth and jutting straight into the sky. All around it, the vast and level prairie landscape stretched far away. The plates of glass used to make the windows are blurred and up close the swirls look like water, the churning surface of a murky river. Rising alone out of a landscape of dust and wind and grass, the Prince House captivated the public and for a few years after it was constructed, people took carriage rides to see it.

Insofar as it can be analyzed interpretively, the Prince House is a space of contradictions. As a domestic space, it carries connotations that are profoundly feminine,

signifying domesticity and evoking fertility. At the same time, conceived and constructed as it was through displays of masculine strength and ingenuity, and interpreted, always, through the character and figure of known to the community as “Poppa Prince,” it is impossible to view the house as anything but the statement of masculine author-ity and virility. The way it jutted straight up out of the grasslands and into the sky seems unapologetically, overtly phallic, yet though Peter Prince lived in the house with four different women in sequence, no children were even conceived there. Although an intensely protected private space, the Prince House has consistently belonged, at least in part, to a public that openly viewed it as exotic and spectacular. Perhaps in defense of the constant gazes of outsiders, the original curtains selected by the family were heavy and dark, occluding the interior space completely, shutting out the gaze of passersby, protecting the interior from the stain of light and the curiosity of others. To me, this contradiction between wanting to be seen and the desire to hide, exemplifies gendered tensions at play both within the people who once lived in the house, and the ways in which their stories have subsequently been remembered and recited. As a symbol, the Prince House codified Christian, capitalist, hetero-normative values, preserving and perpetuating social elitism and traditional class structures and privileging “the family,” stamping these values onto the landscape of an emerging region still grasping for identity. At the time it was built, the house also served as an articulate iteration of Peter Prince’s outstanding wealth and his determination to make the prairie town “go.” Constructed at great expense and labour, the Prince House, Calgary’s first mansion, built by Peter Prince to be seen, to speak his name aloud, functioned as a synecdoche of Prince’s persona, serving as place-marker for his authority and power. In

contradistinction, Prince's first wife Marguerite selected curtains that closed off the interior space, hiding the rooms inside from view. The stakes afforded her by history on the interior space will always, for me, be the parlour, dressed in perpetuity for her funeral - her photo overseeing everything, while she herself cannot be seen. Emma, the woman who followed Marguerite is relegated by history to the second floor, which is ghosted by the sound of her footsteps pacing across the floor. Emma is recorded by the hearsay of urban legend and local mythology as a woman arrested in a perpetual state of looking out - reaching her hand to lift the curtain, gazing out the window into the distance. Emma is the lady in white my friends and I once pretended to see on a school trip to Heritage Park. In terms of the Prince House, the memories and stories repeated and recorded of its past, Rosa Douglas and Emma Whitlock are totally absent - Rosa Douglas, perhaps because she did not live there long enough and Emily, I think, because it was her daughter Norah, and not Emily herself, who saw the house through to the end. Yet since the Prince House was relocated to Heritage Park, and totally refurbished and refurnished there, traces of Norah have been utterly erased, the worn patches in the carpets and the dust and the smell of genteel poverty aired out, washed away, the graffiti scrubbed from the wall.

Although Peter Prince is lauded for his business prowess, and despite the large plethora of business papers collected and indexed, he failed to write a last will and testament. By a process of default, the house passed from Peter Prince to Emily Whitlock. Prince's daughter Rosanna had married Peter Eide, an associate of Prince's when she was sixteen. Prince's son, John had relocated to Hollywood, California. Neither wanted the house and so it passed to Emily. She, in turn, willed it to Norah. Upon Norah's death in 1964, the house went to relatives in England who donated it to the

Alberta and Southern Gas Company. Norah had not married and, to me, her death is in many ways the most wounding. For twenty years after the death of her mother, Norah served as the caretaker to the material archive of Peter Prince, his house and its memories, as well as serving as an embodied mnemonic for his name and place in local narrative. The only thing that is known about Norah, saving her familial ties to estranged relatives in England, is that she died in reduced circumstances, guarding rooms that were no longer her own but instead the domain of strangers. By the time the house came to heritage Park, everything of value had been carried away. Only the hinges on the inside of the interior doors remained beautiful, secret etchings in brass known, I imagine, only by her. In the context of local history, Norah's name is used only as a reference to someone else, to something else: Peter Prince, Emily Whitlock, the Prince House. By focusing on Emma, insisting on *her* form at the window at the exclusion of all others, specifying her hand at the curtain, history has even overlooked Norah's ghost.

Archival Elusion

In terms of the written account of history, Marguerite Corrigan, Peter Prince's first wife, is the more stable than the women who followed after her. Her name is cemented into the records beside Prince's because she bore the couple two children. She is the only of Peter Prince's four wives to have a secure place on the family tree, atop Rosanne (referred to sometimes as Rosanna) and John Prince. In the archive of burial she remains beside him. Their children are buried in the same plot – in death, everyone in their right place with Marguerite as Prince's immortal wife. Emma, Prince's second wife is not so stable. The only family tree I was able to find over the course of my research into the family lists Prince's second, third and fourth wife at the bottom, below

the family proper. They are neatly segregated from touching anyone – the lines upon which their names have been recorded intersect nowhere. They are isolated and apart. The first line, that should bear Emma’s name, year of birth and death is blank – the invisible woman, as though she never was. On a post-it note affixed to the top left corner of the document someone has written the name “Polly Dawes” in pencil. This was later crossed out and “Emma Wallin” printed in its place. According the burial records housed at the Union Cemetery, her name was actually Emma Howe. Somehow her last name has become subsumed. How confusing. In my notes this name is circled and underlined, is followed by two question marks. When Prince’s obituary was printed, her name was omitted from the list of his relations. Only her obituary, in September, 1902 suggests that she was ever there, at all. Rosa Douglas is next and she shares a tombstone with Emma in the Union Cemetery. They are kept apart from Marguerite because neither was catholic while Prince and Marguerite were, as well as their two children – this is my best guess. In Prince’s obituary, published in 1925, Rosa Douglas and Emily Whitlock’s names were confused and Prince’s surviving spouse was listed as Emily Douglas, effectively erasing both women. When Emily died in 1944, she was interred in the Union Cemetery in the plot purchased by Prince for Emma and Rosa. However, perhaps because Prince was no longer available to pay for a headstone, Emily’s grave is unmarked. She remains a woman twice obscured: once by the newspapers, once again in death.

Bearing Witness for the Witness

I find myself at this juncture, yearning to see the faces of these women. I wonder about the landscape of their features. I wonder at the folds of their clothes, the colour of

the hair. Although there are numerous photographs of Peter Prince, there are no images depicting any of his wives after Marguerite. Instead they remain holograms, ideas, ghosts. Their names sigh to me as I sift through Peter Prince's business papers and I look up from my work. *Where are you?* I want to say. Everywhere they elude me. When I consider the many types of archival slippages made manifest in this section, I arrive at the idea of a man who archived his power, position and cultural, as well as personal identity, through the flesh of women. I wonder what this must have *felt* like - being the vehicle through which someone else's name and identity is carried through time, the living surface into which his story is pressed. I wonder at the way each of Peter Prince's wives, with the exception of Marguerite, witnessed the death of the one who came before, witnessed the way in which her flesh was interred and its contours recollected in the form of the next. This procession of dying brings to mind Phelan's description, in the introduction to *Mourning Sex*, of the experience of the spectator of tragic theatre. This evocation makes me immediately implicated, drawing a stark focus on the pain and helplessness I feel trapped as I am in this recitation of death after death, disappearance after disappearance, this rehearsal of dying and vanishing. In the context of tragic theatre, Phelan suggests that no one dies singly (14). However, in history it seems to be possible to never die at all. What is a ghost, I begin to wonder, if she did in fact once live, but in death is obscured by shadow? Above me, I imagine the basilisk darting out her tongue, considering me with her eye, providing me with a tiny reflection of my own image. Her muscles flex and ripple and as I dwell in the affect aroused by this image, I begin to feel that the answer I am seeking, the dark substance leaking out from behind the absence I reach towards, must have less to do with theoretical absences and more to do

with the imprint of specific women who did in fact live but whose lives, and subsequent deaths (in all their woundingly touching detail) go unmarked. The trick of the archive is to be as smooth and clear as glass. With my attention focused on the casualties of this patina, and how rooted these casualties are to gendered, everyday features of power and politics, I continue into a very different sort of archive: an archive of fantasy and affect premised on what it cannot deliver. What sort of archives will this archive be found to shelter, I wonder, as I follow the Prince House, into the landscape of the living history village.

Site #2: Archive of Fantasy

An Introduction to Living History

In its current location at Heritage Park Historical Village, the Prince House stands at a curve in a gravel road on a spacious, manicured lawn. Facing outwards, its back pressed against a thin strand of towering poplar trees and a wild tangle of grass and brush, it brings to mind an antiquated townhouse playing a game of dress-up, disguised (not so successfully) as a summer cottage. In my memories of it as a child, it seemed palatial. As I see it now however, marooned within a massive, green landscape that ends abruptly at the banks of the Glenmore Reservoir, it seems subsumed, diminished by the natural features of the landscape. My memories of the Prince House as a young child mostly involve playing and picnicking on the front lawn in the fragrant, lush afternoons of early summer. I remember the smell of honeysuckle and mock-orange and a landscape awash with sunlight. That my childhood memories of Heritage Park are overwhelmingly bright and green can be attributed to the fact that the park opens to the public in the middle of May and closes in early October. If the weather is bad, if the systems that blow in over the Glenmore Reservoir carry rain, snow or high winds, the park closes. It is a village that exists *only* on the loveliest of days, in the words of Kirshenblatt-Gimblett it is “an oasis out of time” (*Afterlives* 2).

Heritage Park opened in Calgary in 1964 with the optimistic mandate of preserving Western Canadian Heritage. At first the park was quite small – a vast, open space with only a few buildings. Black and white aerial photos taken in these early days show a large, raw tract of land carved open to expose the soil underneath. These photos evoke the excitement of turning new ground, the ecstasy of a fresh start. In 1967, the

park undertook five large-scale and expensive centennial projects, including the relocation and refurbishment of the Prince House, and began billeting itself as Western Canada's largest living historical village. This is the image it perpetuates today.

Magelssen defines living history villages/museums as "those institutions that practice costumed interpretation within reconstructed or restored sites and that depict a particular time in history for educational practices" (xxi). While culturally important, Magelssen points out that they often compromise historical accuracy for the sake of entertainment value. For a year in my early twenties I worked in the marketing department at Heritage Park and throughout this time, the debate between those advocating historical accuracy, and those emphasizing the imperatives of providing good entertainment in the interests of garnering a profit, remained tense and unresolved. These opposing forces are a constant balancing act for institutions that choose to navigate the fine line between museum and amusement park. Economically, they are in direct competition with both. It is not my aim here to enter into discussion over the historical accuracy of Heritage Park's interpretative practices, or to comment on the financial success of these strategies. Rather, I aim to draw specific attention to the Prince House in the context of Heritage Park and offer an exploration of a certain kind of archive: an archive of fantasy and affect premised on the codification of a specific narrative (or founding myth) taking place daily. My intention in doing so is to explore some of the ways in which versions of the past are created and maintained, as well as pointing to traces of violence and desire swirling just beneath the sunny, smooth surface of this specific kind of archive.

Heritage Park Historical Village currently contains roughly ninety exhibits ranging in size and complexity from a refurbished Swedish sauna, to an operational grain elevator and working blacksmith shop. Heritage Park is home to railway Car 76 which was present at the driving of the last spike, as well as the S.S. Moyie paddlewheeler, once used by the Canadian Pacific Railway as a means of transporting personnel and supplies through Canada's inland waterways. According to brochures and travel literature, the park mandate is to bring the history of Western Canada, circa 1860 to 1950, to life through costumed interpreters, historic buildings and a large collection of working antiques and artefacts. Park advertising invites visitors to "journey back in time to experience the vital and significant story of the settlement of the West and how the landscape helped shape our distinctive Western culture" (Kam 1). As a statement of purpose, this phrase plays with citation, and through the oblique reference to a unified narrative, suggests a concrete and specific connection between landscape and culture. However, at no point within Heritage Park is this relationship made explicit. Indeed, the landscape of Heritage Park is implicated only in its suggested vastness, which continues to slowly diminish as the park continues to collect and build new exhibits. This process of giving way echoes the continuing urban growth of the cities and suburbs of Western Canada and the slow substitution of natural landscapes for constructed horizons and built environments. This commentary on the relationship of Western Canada and the indigenous landscape is, I suspect, unintended, however it is there nonetheless: an archive of urbanization. Western culture, similarly, though at first a promising focal point, is even less overtly addressed than the trees, grass and sky. Within Heritage Park, "Western culture" appears in a stilted state of artificial symbiosis. It is simply *there*, referenced

constantly but never clearly articulated or defined. The assumption is that visitors will extrapolate, will fill in the contours of the suggested form and arrive at a broad, conceptual construction of history that must, by default, be largely based on their own subjectivities and points of cultural and psychological reference. This recognition, this reference to one's own subjectivities brings to mind Taylor's description of performance in the context of her work on hauntology. "Performance constitutes a (quasi-magical) invocational practice," she argues, "It provokes emotions it claims only to represent, evokes memories and grief that belong to some other body. It conjures up and makes visible not just the "live" but the powerful army of the always, already living. The power of seeing through performance is the recognition that we've seen it all before..." (65)

Throughout the time I worked at Heritage Park, I often wondered, as I watched visitors boarding motor-coaches at the end of a day, precisely what story of history they were leaving with, wondered how different this image was than the one they had brought with them through the gates at the beginning of the day. My guess is that it must be very much the same.

Finding Founding Myths

As I write this chapter, the students in my undergraduate seminar are working through a reading of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Their term papers are fecund with the adjectives we use to describe ancient mythology and lore: tragic heroes and vengeful gods, the vicissitudes of fate and the founding of great cities, the waging of titanic wars. The word *propaganda* seeps out of every paragraph; biopower is implicated everywhere. Writing about the *Aeneid*, my students are fast to point out the ways in which the story-line seems propelled by a need to standardize and codify contemporary morality and standards of

behaviour through the vehicle of the past. *This is top-down agenda setting*, the communication studies students assert. They are astounded to see “the past,” hitherto seen as the realm of sacred truth, so co-opted. They are suddenly on their guard. As I read their interpretations of this Roman founding myth, this story of origins, this overtly propagandist transcription of Roman values, the narratives of the settlement of Western Canada evident everywhere in Heritage Park’s many archival references hangs in the air above me. I want to take my students to Heritage Park and set them loose. I want them to come back to me holding a different sort of founding myth in their hands. Their assignment would be to write it out in dactylic hexameter, like Virgil. The founding of Rome; the founding of the Canadian West: there are so many commonalities, so many intersecting points in the plot lines - only the poetics have changed. Evident in both is the invisible, skilful hand of the poet/historian, reaching back into the past and coaxing forward a narrative of genesis, scripting it into something exotic yet familiar, relatable yet larger-than-life: Heroes, pioneers, wanderings through vast, strange lands, hardship and sacrifice and finally the establishment of what is destined to become a great city. Yet, while Virgil’s Aeneas is a hero of the great city of Troy, a warrior and the founder of Rome, the “heroes” of Heritage Park, the settlers and pioneers who settled and built the city of Calgary, the progenitors of the Canadian West and the originators its ensuing mythology are, in contradistinction, a parochial assortment of businessmen, policemen, farmers and ranchers. For decades after his death, Peter Prince was named as a great founding father of Calgary. “Poppa Prince” they called him and well into the early 1980’s his name is evoked in newspapers as an epigraph for what is to follow - a chauvinistic recitation of Western Canadian morality and values, an iteration of who

“we” are, who we must continue to be: pioneers, bold, generous but savvy, sagacious, hard and steely. Peter Prince, however, is not Aeneas. He is not a son of Troy, he has vanquished no foes. His one journey into the underworld was to be his only descent, and once there, once his body had passed away, his name very quickly followed. Peter Prince’s role as founder and father of Calgary/Western Canada is dead. As a component of the founding myth articulated by Heritage Park, only the Prince *House* continues to reverberate through time, a domestic space in which the names and forms of women are suggested everywhere, spoken of, remembered, wondered at - a place in which Poppa Prince is almost entirely forgotten. As a fragment of history/memory, Peter Prince has been so meticulously and redundantly archived (articles in the Peter Prince fond at the Glenbow Museum include notes of credit, orders for machinery, proof of citizenship as well as a plethora of business papers), that he haunts exactly nothing. Instead, it is the women he married who endure. Indeed, the mythology surrounding the Prince House is specific and repetitive, centering with very little variation on a single figure: the lady at the window, the hand she lifts the curtain, the ghost who haunts the third storey of the Prince House. Popular in urban legend are accounts of her footsteps roaming back and forth across the second storey floor, or rumours of her figure appearing at the second-storey window. When I worked in the Marketing Department at the Park, I once received a photograph from a visitor to Heritage Park that had been taken of one of the second storey rooms. In the photo there is an orb of light that illuminates the image from one of the corners. It is a beautiful item – a photo-shopped ghost. I remember the eye-rolling this photo received when I showed it around the administration building. It was the unofficial policy of the Park at that time that the Park’s mandate, to connect visitors with

the settlement of Western Canada, was compromised by these ghost stories. Mediating history was a serious task and humouring ghost stories was viewed as counter to this task. If queries about ghosts arose, interpreters were instructed to counter with a cheerful summary of historical *fact*. This is where my interest became significantly more pointed. I liked the ghost who haunted the architecture of Heritage Park's most famous exhibit, and I resented that she was being cut so deliberately and relentlessly from the narrative. At the time it felt as though something important was taking place, that orchestrating this omission was significant. By sending me the photo, the anonymous guest was telling me something, (re)creating something which to her/him spoke of agency, design, pleasure and potential, something elusive and ephemeral – something important. What this 'something' points to is the fact that under the unified truth narrative, or codified story line of the past, swirls any number of other pasts, voices, hands, narratives, bodies, truths. A city can be founded on a single story, but the other stories this single voice obscures cannot be killed. Instead they continue to reappear, etched faintly into the background of other things: shadows, orbs of light, a hand lifting the curtain, a woman's footsteps in the dark.

Origin, Authority, Simulacrum: Inside the Living History Machine

The mythology of origins (the settlement of the Canadian West), that sign of which Heritage Park aims to be both signified and signifier, is pivotal to the way the park has framed the Prince House, and central to the way this framing has taken place is the rhetorical claim put forth by the living history village, the promise that visitors to the park will "journey back in time." As Magelssen points out in his discussion of living history villages, these institutions "become the real past, not by transporting their spectators back

in time, but by emphasizing their historical authenticity aloud” (xxi). Authenticity and accuracy are of paramount importance to this task – taking visitors *back in time* - and Magelssen is right to point out that the relationship between these terms is socially constructed and relative to the philosophical perceptions of the institution (Ibid). As a site, Heritage Park promises to both *be* the past, as well as the vehicle in which the visitor travels there. This double promise is problematic, for even though it is marketed as a different temporal space, Heritage Park is not actually the past; it is not the historic actuality it references. Nor does it move. It is emphatically *not* a vehicle. Instead, Heritage Park as a series of images/exhibits is a simulacrum, defined by Baudrillard as “a series of images that are better and more real than any lived event or space by virtue of the institutional authority that legitimizes them” (6). Heritage Park is real because it tells us over and over that it is real. It is a publicly funded, not-for-profit institution that refers, through signage throughout the park, as well as through brochures and “historical practices” enacted by costumed interpreters, to externally situated “facts” located in archives housed elsewhere. Walking through Heritage Park’s gates does not transport the visitor to this elsewhere (understood as either the origin of the past itself, or the authentic record of this past). Instead, by hiding beneath this screen of rhetorical smoke and mirrors, Heritage Park is able to presents itself as the archive once removed (the origin) *and* once magnified (the authority). This double-function of the living history village has less to do with metonymic expressions of the past and quite a bit more to do with power and the specific type of authority encysted within our constructions of the archive itself. The authority of the living history village is the deferred authority of the invisible eye that sees the real past, the invisible ear and nose that can hear and smell it, and the

invisible hand that can reach the original archive (the real past). This is combined with the practiced mind of the professional, which establishes itself as capable of squaring the confusing profusion of paper and parchment upon which the past is transcribed into a well ordered narrative that is even better than the real past - better because it carries the authority of truth. Nothing in our chaotic present is so tidy and certain. In this way, Heritage Park promotes itself as the vehicle *to* the past and the master interpreter able to make meaning of what is found there (the authority) as well as the past itself (the *site*: the origin).

Heritage Park's status as a living history village/museum is also predicated on the fact that, not only does it advertise itself as a different temporal space animated by costumed interpretation and historical practice (threshing grain, sewing garments, ploughing, singing and engaging in a variety of folk arts and games), Heritage Park is still growing. As a museum, it is not hermetically sealed and the problems and critiques attributed to living history museums swirl around it constantly. In June 2009 Heritage Park unveiled a small prairie synagogue, relocated from Sibbald Alberta. This unveiling of Heritage Park's first non-replicated, non-Christian, non Anglo-Saxon European exhibit large enough to be peopled by costumed interpreters during park hours, speaks directly to one of the most commonly articulated critiques of living history museums. As Magelssen points out, living history museums "arrange the records and acquired rationalizations of the past in order to present certain stagings of history...utilizing a form of representation based on linear narratives that must choose to portray certain elements and relationships while repressing others" (xxii). This observation seems obvious and perhaps an inevitable quality of any sort of archival endeavour, yet it is important. Because a unified

narrative of the past is inevitably selected and represented by the living history museum, as certain kinds of archival machines, these institutions default to what Giorgio Agamben refers to as “vulgar representations of time as a precise and homogeneous continuum” (161). In other words, some events, relationships, images and periods are beautified and presented as aesthetically pleasing and utopian while other, more difficult, complicated, problematic “dirty” ones are passed over entirely. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call these intersections between past events and present sensibilities “fabulations” (168). They are fabulous constructions. So, Heritage Park Living Historical Village is a problematic, sometimes indeterminate space - as an archive when not referencing itself, it presents only vague reference points to other archives. Heritage Park the archive is a map of dreams and desire, a utopian ideal of Western Canada’s founding narrative, a beguiling hint at our origins and a hall of mirrors that reveals our own image. With these concepts now at play, and with some of the contradictions, problematics and discourses of erasure and obfuscation exposed, or in Phelan’s words “marked,” I turn my attention to the Prince House.

Holding Bodies Close to Death

When the Prince House was donated to Heritage Park, it was unwanted. It tumbled through a series of legal testaments and wills and the hands of those unwilling to keep it until it landed under the dominion of the Alberta and Southern Gas Company (the company at which Peter Prince had once worked) – who likewise did not want it. Mr. Ronald Blair, acting in the interests of the company, contacted Vera Burns, Heritage Park’s first historian and she made an expedition to the Eau Claire district of Calgary to see it. In the years between 1944 and 1964, Nora Whitlock, Peter Prince’s step-daughter

had taken boarders and the house had declined. I picture her death in penury, swallowing dust, walking worn paths in the carpet. This disintegration seems sad. Burns investigated the interior space and wrote afterwards that everything that had not been affixed to the ceilings, floors and walls had been carried away. There was virtually nothing left except for some brass hardware on the doors, and the doors themselves. This makes me think of rag-pickers, carpet-baggers, grave robbers. The house had also been vandalized (4). To Vera Burns, the house represented a “last remainder of gracious living” (ibid) and she wanted it for the park. In 1967, centennial grants were applied for, cheques written and partnerships struck (Mr. Carl Nickle and Mr. Harvie, local businessmen, Mr Douglas Hawks of Montreal Trust, Mr. Blair) and work began immediately on the house. A great many photographs were taken of the brickwork and then the bricks were “chuted” (5) down from the wall. 25,000 bricks, sandstone trim balconies, bay windows and verandas, all removed. Then the house was cut into three pieces – the tower was separated from the house, and the house was cut in three pieces: once just above the second floor, once just below the tower. On a recent visit to the Prince House in January 2011 I stood in the cupola in a narrow, unstable place made of beams and uneven boards, and looked up and saw the cut line. The beams had been braced on both sides and the line looked raw – like it had been made with a single stroke by a chainsaw. I stood on tip-toe and ran my fingers across the scar. *History is for cutting*, the air seemed to say. The house survived this surgery without a single outward sign, but the scar is there, if one knows where to look. This suggests to me that buildings are resilient, just like history, just like memory. But change affects their bodies, is captured there and held.

When I describe this trajectory of the Prince House through time and space, from its initial status of grandeur, its haughty disdain for the vast, level prairies upon which it once stood, into comfortable stolidity on a mansion-lined street in a growing metropolis, to a stripped and humble casing of unwanted (I cannot help myself) *skin*, that became a burden to young relatives who did not want it, and finally into the hands of an institution that subsequently donated this “body” to “science,” I am stunned. The house becomes human through my words, becomes female. I think this is because, while the Prince House women have disappeared, the house remains and in some way, I feel that the house now functions as the proxy for their absent bodies – the house *becomes* the story, performs the story in perpetuity, that the women who are gone cannot. As I think about the history of the house, rather than seeing bricks and stone I picture a woman, once beautiful, prized, cosseted, displayed and adorned passing into middle age and the beginnings of neglect and penury, slipping into silent decay. Those people who once wanted and made her animated moved on, moved away, moved beyond, and she began to die. Soon, only her flesh remained, problematic, old, un-useful. Finally, her death is enacted in an elaborate staging of dissection, embalment and display. Like Eva Peron, her body is an object to be seen and looked at, fetishized. Her scars are carefully hidden on the inside, the casing of skin and bone lined with prosthetic grandeur in a way that reminds me of a funeral ritual played out in perpetuity. Her corpse is cleaned and dressed in finery she never owned, four times marked: marked by her own passing, by her dismemberment and subsequent stitching back together, marked by many visitors passing through, marked by curators and carpenter dedicated to her preservation. My mind turns again and again to this grotesque imagery, forcing me to acknowledge the fact that, to

me, the narrative of the Prince House is an allegorical rendering of a larger narrative of women: Vera Burns, who laboured earnestly in the service of the preservation of historical narrative only to have her work subsumed under the weightier names of male board members; Marguerite Prince who died first but survived in the end; the two “ladies of the water,” Rosa and Emma Prince who were dying from the first; the almost always totally erased Rosa Douglas; Emily of the unmarked grave; Nora, who died in penury and whose name is now spoken only in reference to someone else’s. I feel angry and I wonder whose body I long to hold; what/whose erasure through so violent a method has me feeling so exposed; whose scripted death am I afraid of? Right now, at this specific juncture within my recitation of archival violence and in the middle of a description of the death of a house that has become immediately and explicitly female as well as embodied, I feel certain that the erasure I fear is my own. I can no longer separate these deaths and different erasures in my mind and in my throat I feel a constriction that I simply cannot shake, which is the fear that this recitation of vanishing female flesh foretells my own inevitable death, decay, helpless servitude - my own vanishing. I feel as though my arms are bound, my eyes are blinded and my mouth struck dumb. I find myself trying to speak, with increasing panic into the dark, red bloodstain of my own disappearance, into the fear of the death of my own (fragile, female) body.

Of Irony and Heritage; of Memories of Death

Bringing the Prince House to Heritage Park was an act of great purpose. It was executed with precision and artistry and it was a tremendous logistical and financial expenditure. This act expressed violence and desire and was a manifestation of both. This act created a specific type of archive and placed it within the macro-archive of

Heritage Park, the expert rendering of origin and the locale of authority. The simultaneous act of destruction and preservation by which the house was stripped bare, carved into pieces and relocated throws into play a sequence of citations that speak directly from a place of death and into a place of death, taking place precisely in the space of overlap in which this death and this desire interact. This dangerous space is liminal and dark and I am drawn to it; I argue that *we* are drawn to it. This magnetic attraction to the dark stain of our own origin is archive fever. It is the death drive, the obsession with our darkest memories; the erotic landscape of our ecstatic performance of death and resurrection, remembering, killing, forgetting and inventing. This process is profoundly performative; it is simultaneously socially constructed, culturally transmitted and personally perpetuated. This drive towards death is often difficult to identify and articulate in concrete terms. The Prince House however, filed away as it is inside the archive of Heritage Park, the archive that claims to embody all aspects of the archive at the same time (the origin, the vehicle back *into* the origin, the authority and the interpreter/enforcer of the authority) exemplifies this process beautifully.

In her work on heritage and folklore, reminds us that although tourist destinations seem like “oases out of time, they are implicated in a larger economy of transnational flows of money, people, and symbolic capital” (*Afterlives* 2). Moving the Prince House to Heritage Park is precisely this sort of overtly economic venture. Heritage Park itself is this sort of venture. Although the park is a registered not-for-profit organization, it is also a capitalist institution and the park has operated proudly in the black for the majority of the past decade. Yet, at the same time, Heritage Park is a performance of waste and excess. The Prince House, for example is an edifice designed to be lived in yet is now

vacant almost constantly. Performing the removal and subsequent refurbishment of the house to the Park was a performance of excess, as is clothing it in antiques and expensive, imported accoutrement (carpets from Great Britain, drapes from Montreal...). Furthermore, the violent performance of slicing the house open, removing its casings and stripping its interior is a cultural expression, articulated by Roach, as an act that goes beyond the “utilitarian practices necessary for physical survival” (41). Roach argues that this violence as well as the preparation and aftermath of violence, like the aesthetic, is performative – “even if the only witness is the victim” (Ibid). When Roach’s observation is placed in the context and language of Derrida’s *Archive Fever*, the violence through which the Prince House was wrenched from its original location, stripped bare, sliced apart and re-planted, can be interpreted as the manifestation of our specific and undeniable obsession, our desire, for origins expresses this in the context of the preservation of heritage, noting that the concept of heritage already signifies death, “whether actual or imminent” (*Afterlives* 4). Heritage as a term and concept, she argues “endows the dead and dying with a second life, an *afterlife* [italics original], through the instrumentalities of exhibition and performance. It is in this sense that heritage produces a ‘resurrection theatre’” (Ibid). What this observation suggests is that heritage is already dead, just as the origin is already dead. Thus, the activity of preserving the Prince House at Heritage Park for the purpose of preserving heritage is a task predicated on death. As Derrida reminds us, the search for the un-findable, the origin, is immediately a search for death. Thus, the desire for origins, for the true founding narrative of Western Canada’s “heritage” leads to the violent performance of waste and excess whereby a house is purchased and killed, embalmed to resemble itself more perfectly than it could in life and

then displayed as living history. This social expenditure exceeds the need for physical violence and it foreshadows what must inevitably follow, which is more death, our own death. This process, this performance, is the passionate, aesthetic desire for death: the erotic simulacrum. It is the resurrection theatre.

Imitations of Immortality

I once had an experience at the Prince House that touched me profoundly (which I will discuss in the subsequent chapter section). In an effort to make meaning of this experience, I thought that I could peel back the smooth casing of my own memory and climb back in, re-experiencing what I had lost. I was at a loss for myself in these memories, I felt external to myself; I felt haunted. To feel haunted is to feel an absence and to mourn this absence without being able to give it a name. The more time moved and bent and warped, the further away from myself I felt. Somehow, the past had become something other and apart, something that happened once that could not be re-inhabited. This need to re-inhabit, this nostalgia, is a marked feature on the landscape of the living history village, though it is never named as such. In my time working at the park, in my many forays into the trappings of time gone by, I encountered people walking through buildings, the spaces between buildings, touching, looking, not touching, peering at antiques they could not touch, reaching into dark corners. If we accept Heritage Park's rendering of the Prince House as a document filed in a larger archive of make-believe, marked by the violence we perpetuate on our present to secure our future, the desire to materialize the immaterial, then we arrive at Pierre Nora's articulation of *lieu de mémoire* – which is a perfect end to this section of this treatise and a lovely bridge into the next. “If we accept that the fundamental purpose of *lieu de mémoire* is to stop time, to block

the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial,” Nora writes, “... it is also clear that *lieu de mémoire* exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless cycle of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications” (14). In this last articulation of preservation and destruction, I feel that I am situated in a place of play between acts of dying that seem to reproduce and multiply death, shattering it like a prism, sending parts of it everywhere. It is impossible for me to end this feeling, which leaves me alone with my suspicion that Derrida’s assertion that death is not entirely biological, nor entirely cultural, must be totally right, but not right in entirety. There is a deeper implication and a deeper level of vulnerability pulling me farther than this statement allows me to go. And so, with the words “resurrection theatre” ringing in my ears, I prepare to enter into a different kind of archive, an archive of memory and affect premised on the assertion that between the past and the present there is a liminal space of memory that can be inhabited. As I walk into this space I remember the lady in white. I step forward and I reach my hands towards her shadow, anticipating touch.

Site #3: Archive of Affect

This is a memory archive. It is comprised of recalled fragments of feeling pertaining to a specific event described, after the fact, as traumatic. This event took place within a twelve hour period beginning around sunset one day in late October, 2006, and ending when the sun rose the following morning. The descriptor “trauma” is a personal touch – these memories are my own. This archive is frank in what it occludes. This is not a transcription that claims to detail each moment discreetly, nor is it an impressionistic rendering of how I “felt.” Instead it is a chronicle of feeling that speaks of longing for the lost subject, establishing the origin of this desire within the body.

As a particular kind of archive, memory is examined in a moment of uncanny complicity in the kind of archival violence that seeks to obscure its own interference at the same time that it solidifies its own invisibility/innocence. Perhaps this task of transcription and analysis will leave me bereft, marooned within the realization that I have no memories, only memory itself. Derrida has made me nervous, unsure of the validity of my own reiteration, the recitation of my own memory, and so I feel the necessity of setting my own rules. They are as follows:

1) My own memories are used with the explicit intention of gaining access into, what Hall calls “the uneven, intimate and demanding process of the subject’s formation into and out of the...archive” (350). I engage with these memories dialogically and with the view that as fragments of repeated feeling, they are not hermetically sealed. Rather, they retain the potential to make meaning, and to have meaning made of them, long after they are experienced. 2) The past is not a foreign country (Lowenthal 1985), and feelings *can* be re-inhabited.

However, the past *is* contested ground – it is a somatically constructed space that is steeped in violence, loss and the contestation of different truths constantly unfolding. The past does not have a face, but there have been many faces *in* the past. My ability, *our* ability to engage with these “historical” entities has as much to do with everyday hegemonies, gender-politics and competing discourses of “truth” as theoretical interactions with notions of archive, memory and narratives of the past.

By rooting this particular archive in my own experience, I aim to write directly into the archive’s capacity for colonization and for violence. I do this by attending explicitly to the body – my body, and the imagined bodies my memories, feelings, fear and sadness desire(d) to expose. What follows is a performance of the memories of a single night, beginning in the evening one night in late October, 2006. These memories trace the night I spent alone in the Prince House and end with the sunrise the following morning.

Walking

I choose to enter the house at sunset - I don't remember why - but I have very little time to open the locked veranda and the outside door, and then the interior door before the sun slides away and I lose the light. Inside it's grey. It's the colour of ash. There are footsteps in the dust that are not my own.

What is at stake here is my intrusion into a domestic space that already shows signs of having been colonized by someone else. By the time I felt established enough inside the house to examine my own imprint onto its surfaces (the dust that covered everything) it was dark and I could not see. As this first fragment of memory suggests, I found a way to enter the performance of history by filling in the outline left by someone

other than myself. I felt impelled to walk around the space, in the light that remained, establishing my presence. I did not know who had been there before me, but I felt it very necessary to over-write the trace of their presence with my own. I walked around every room on the first floor and came, finally, to rest on the chaise longue. Peter Prince was supposed to have rested there every day upon returning home. He read the paper there, establishing *his* presence on the entranceway until he felt inclined to enter the domestic space of the interior.

Negotiating Presence

*I can feel it on my skin. It's cold. The air inside has not moved in months and It presses into me. The front hallway is quiet and still. The air investigates the hair at the nape of my neck and everything waits for what I will do next – which is nothing. I just stand there feeling foolish. “What had you been expecting?” the air seems to say. Dust moves above me. The shadows are cavernous. The silence is enormous and moving through it, it feels thin, brittle and sweet like ether. Camphor, damp – it smells....and there is junk piled up in corners that have not been dusted. I feel displaced. The red, imitation-velvet ropes are still fastened across the doorways and they are the first things I move. The latches are rusty and open only after leaving red impressions on my hand, opening with a fricative, sibilant hissss – a sound that barely makes a sound - a sound trying not to be heard. The barest outline of sound escaping and moving, creeping through the air - but that I **catch** nonetheless; a sound that suggests a clenched jawbone, breath grating against the sharp edges of teeth, disapproving me. The dust makes my eyes water. My skin itches.*

The body is implicated immediately. When I imagine “history” as a somatically constructed space, I predicate this definition on inner worlds, experiences and subjectivities but also on the body – *in* the body. The scattered features of the interior museum landscape connote an archaeological site in which bones and debris belonging to the human body are spread out in disarray, without context and without the casing of skin. The effect of this was that I felt watched from all sides. Similarly, I felt disinclined to touch any of the objects around me. I felt surrounded by relics. The corporeal body of the past is blatantly absent, promised everywhere and everywhere withheld. I cast an auditory net over the space and retrieved particles of sonic data: the sound of a noise making its stealthy way through the air, trying to reach me, trying to investigate my form. As I remember the sensation of the air on my skin, it was as though the incorporeal past was making overtures towards my body, thinking perhaps of taking it for its own. This thought seems strange to me in retrospect: the fear that I would be colonized by the past, I who *have* a body. I felt the hyper-rational faith in my intellect begin to seep away, felt layers of uncertainty wrapping around me instead. This felt like vertigo, felt like falling.

Playing House

I want to play the piano. I want to see what the yellow sheet music is that has always sat primly on the music stand, just far enough away that I could never read it. I want to make the house jump and dance. I want everything to wake up and feel confused by the sentimental waltz my fingers will tease into the air, by the saccharine bars measured out in three-quarter time, an anachronistic love song. My fingers bend over

the keys. The dead will wake up and dance in the shadows in lace and velvet and dust. I am giddy with delight. When I finish playing (the chorus is tricky, I fake the bass and falter through the melody), I notice that the front door has swung open. Did I latch it? (Surely I latched it...?) The children painted on the beige vase do not answer. I feel the room sway, dip and spin. The waltz thrums invisibly through the musty air.

The piano book is very old but the conventions of rhythm and melody have not changed. I am a *very* poor pianist. My specialty is sham melody, impressionism rather than precision. But I can't get into the waltz – I can't feel its method. Playing the piano in the Prince House was troubling. The air rejected my attempt at a waltz and so I played songs I knew. They sounded tinny and out of tune, and when I stopped playing it seemed as though my efforts to produce sound in the end only compounded the silence. I could never fool my mother, or my grandfather, or my piano teacher for long with my fraudulent rendering of music. They could read the notes and I refused to and in the end there would be silence and I would sit on the bench on my hands feeling guilty and embarrassed. There is no-one to be fooled in the silent house but I am embarrassed by my shoddy playing anyway. Paul Connerton says that we perform memories of our collective past, “re-enacting the past in our present conduct” (*How Societies Remember* 72). “In habitual memory,” he suggests, “the past is...sedimented in the body” (Ibid). For Nora, these sedimented behaviours compose the foundation of “true memory.” This is a striking thought, especially as it pertains to the tableau I created, sitting stiffly upright on the piano bench, cheeks burning before an imagined audience – anxious that I had *played* badly. I wondered whose past had been sedimented in my body. Here I sat in a domestic space feeling anxious and critical before an audience of no one, re-enacting my own past

in an attempt to reach someone else's. I felt lonely, a lone researcher trying to find knowledge on the hinterland of someone else's family. Later, at the Glenbow Museum, I leafed through a piano book that was compiled from sheaves of sheet music collected from the late 1880's forward. The name on the front page was Maggie Eide which meant it had belonged to Peter Prince's granddaughter. But the dates were wrong and Maggie Eide had never lived at the Prince House. Even though I loved her name, written in the top margins with the effort and artistry of an earnest, eager child, I had to let the piano book go.

Rehearsing Sleep

It becomes very dark and I hear strange noises. I have blankets with me but no timepiece. Nothing in the house moves and there is no light. Sitting down on the chaise longue, I have burrowed into the sleeping bags and blankets and now I feel afraid to move. Trapped in my small circle of comfort I feel scared to turn around and look behind me. My neck is stiff with the effort of remaining motionless. Of all the things I am, the gifts I have, the things I can do, what I cannot do is remain still. I am...I was a child who fidgeted. My rebellion was small, undetected movement; even the sound of my name is restless. The room surrounds me and is so still that I suddenly know it is too late to learn non-motion. The lady and the children above me learned the patience of serenity, or at least could fake it for the duration of a sitting in a photo parlour. I feel hypnotised and slightly ill, staring into the glossy veneer of their image behind glass, thinking about how the Victorians liked to photograph their dead, laid out as though they were still living. The clothes they wear look terrifying and dark, collars choking their throats, dark hair that is lank and looks greasy. They look anaemic, the entire family. Maybe they are dead

in the photograph. Maybe they were never alive at all. It is very soon after this, I think, that I fall asleep.

My imagination is awash in gothic cliché.

Dreaming

I am drifting, stuck in the liminality between waking and sleeping. I am thinking/dreaming of sickness, of how the house must, on some level, have smelled of a sickness that I imagine would never leave. "Nearly a decade of dying," the air sighs. In my mind I see it, their sickness, seeping silently through the wallpaper and drapes. The house, dressed to resemble itself perfectly, seems like a stage set for a rehearsal of death that marched on and on and on. I think of small feet wrapped in slippers padding across the floor above me. This image, of pilgrimages towards death played out within the confines of the above-stairs bedrooms, fascinates me. I open my eyes and hear footsteps, walking and walking. The echo they make I can hear in my mind, pulsing against my skin. It stirs the hair around my neck and I feel warm and sticky. I smell laudanum and honey. The air appears amber. Sickness is, perhaps, my greatest fear. I am young - but my breath as it leaves and returns and fills my lungs falters. Nutmeg and warm water, bedpans filled with crimson foam. Coughing that tears the night. What do ghosts dream about? I think. "Drowning," the air whispers back, snickering at my breath and the way it makes my throat ache. I imagine men drowning and falling under a foaming river that is suddenly crimson. Coughing, arms arched and grasping the air, which is cold. Like the water. "Sleep is unkind." The air says, (almost) tenderly. Above me, the footsteps fall like rain on the eaves.

Waking up, I am horrified. My breath is frantic.

The word *hysteria* floats to the surface of my thoughts, establishing its own pre-conditions, announcing its own onset. I push it away from me and establish my intellect instead. I want to make some knowing reference to the cliché image of a damaged woman confined (for the good of everyone) above stairs, haunting the rafters with her (metaphorical and embodied) malevolence – a latent threat to innocent, young (female) interlopers. The image I have evoked hovers, heavy-handed, above me. I am almost tricked into believing the string of literary references drawing me closer to the spectre of this gendered imaginary. My mouth feels dry. The mad woman in the attic: the fate of flesh that is otherwise un-useful. I imagine the sickness of this flesh creeping through the walls, towards me – I who am (still) whole, (still) young. I feel ill.

Touching

I understand sickness. All I have to do is reach my fingers out and I can touch the moist, warm space of this word. I am sick often. Often, I have to be careful. I have to stay warm. It is hard for me to travel – heat and dry air, crowds, cold, the movement of boats, trains, cars....Sometimes I become anxious. Sometimes I can't sleep. I imagine a doctor with a beard like snow and a high collar grasping at my pulse. Rest, he would tell me, and the air would breathe the word "laudanum" and all my dreams would be the colour of amber. My nerves would quake at the sound of rain. I imagine a bouquet of prairie flowers wilting in a nosegay beside a single bed. Not a wedding bed. I imagine

this so easily that I am scared. Three wives waited their last years out above me: a rehearsal of death in three acts. I see them in my mind, stoic and un-beautiful, waiting, walking and restless in the long dark hours – arrested in the middle of lives that grew outwards and then had nowhere to go: seasons and days, weeks of deeds that are recorded by no one, witnessed by no one. Our touch is sticky, their fingers against my neck, which is wet like honey. I had fallen asleep under so many layers of blankets and dreamed and not waken when I became too warm. Now I am covered in sweat, shivering and scared. In the dark, our touch is crimson. I am afraid of contracting their sickness.

Marguerite Prince, Peter Prince's first wife, died in her early forties. She died in the house and the only photo I have seen of the interior space is of the parlour, dressed in mourning for her funeral. The photograph does not show the body and I grasp at the affective outline of her absent form. I consider the female body as the contested terrain of the past, monument, landscape of colonization, erotic flesh and desire embodied. The middle-aged body of a woman dying above-stairs, wracked with silent bouts of suffering that are re-iterated and repeated, though never recorded: indecency, difference, disappearance, grotesquery...sickness. The second Mrs Prince was a lady of the water, was made a widow by the water. Her husband had been killed in a log drive, wrestling logs down the Bow River to Peter Prince's lumber mill. She was dying but "Poppa Prince" married her anyway. She died of a tubercular condition two years later. He married her nurse after that and she also became sick – cancer. When *she* died, he married *her* nurse (and then there were four). Like princesses in a tower – except they weren't.

Re-membering Terror

Sometimes, my mind drifts and I forget where I am. My body mellows. The planes of my elbows and knees relax. But then I remember and I have to make my mind strong again. The night is very long. I have been following the moon through the window but now I cannot see it. I feel bored. The door is latched and pumpkins are piled against it. It has swung open three times, each time while I was assiduously focused on something else. Now I'm watching it neurotically, eagerly, daring it to open. Above me, the irregular sounds, the soft creaks and thumps seem more like footsteps than ever. The darkness that swells down the stairs from the second floor seems charged. The longer I stare into it, the more I sense that it is moving, is filled with things that are moving. I think about the lady in the white dress, smelling of earth and dust but also like the prairie wind. I imagine her crawling across the floor above me, craning her neck around the corner of the stairs, curling her fingers around the banister. In my mind, her fingers are white and skeletal but delicate; her fingernails are blue. In none of the photographs of the Prince family, have I ever seen a woman's hand. The Mrs Princes have kept the bones and features and muscles of their fingers secret – also the knowledge and skill their fingers held. The skin on my scalp begins to crawl. I remember being told by someone that the Prince House kitchen is an awkward and unruly space. Even though four women lived there in turn, the kitchen shows no sign of a woman's hand. This touch is absent everywhere. I twist my fingers through my hair, flexing them in turn. My hands are always chapped and bruised, not lovely like my mother's. I imagine another hand wrapping itself around the edge of the banister, next to the first, and then another, and another – all blue, some with rings, others tinged black around the nail beds. This is the

point at which I begin to feel the most afraid. I want to move from the chaise longue. I want to walk up the stairs. I want to overcome this thrumming darkness....but I cannot move. I am rooted. I am beside myself. All this waiting and wanting and fear of the dark stairs crushes forward and I feel a crescendo building somewhere inside my chest. I determine that I will move – yet, just when my legs felt ready to straighten, I lose my courage. The darkness that had been pulsing forward peels back its lip in scorn and recedes. Grey light begins to seep into the room. Unaccountably, I sense that I have lost. Nothing is watching any longer. There is no pulsing presence anywhere. Upstairs is quiet. The air feels hollow.

The fear I felt in the late hours of the night and early morning was real - is real, and I have revisited and probed the contours of this feeling many times since, trying to make it make sense; trying to make it mean something. As an uncanny experience, a haunting comes into being as a violation of the law of non-contradiction. As the embodiment of both presence and absence, a ghost both “is” and “is not”. While I had at first attended to the differences between presence and absence, sameness and difference, self and other, in a haunting, all of these pairs are troubled by the destabilization of binary opposites. The anxiety caused by these radical interruptions of meaning-making puts question to the possibility of identity itself - and the result, as I experienced and continue to experience, is indeterminacy, ambiguity and temporal distension. Caught in the thrall of what I now describe as a haunting was to be forcibly thrust out of a space of positive self-identification and rationally enabled agency, into a hinterland of liminality. As Guy Debord suggests, “the spectacle as a unifying event is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images” (7). In her work on hauntology,

Taylor expands this notion, suggesting that in terms of a haunting; the spectacle...is that which we do *not* see (67). This way of defining ghosts provides an interesting counterpoint to the archive which, very broadly construed, can be understood as that which we *do* see. Further to this point, according to Derrida, for an archive to exist, certain elements must be transmitted from the private to the public sphere. The four wives of Peter Prince, their lives and deeds, bodies, details and deaths somehow did not make the leap from one sphere to the next and, as such, can be looked at and sensed only as absences or partial presences. Suspended between spectacle and archive, presence and absence, the impression they make on time seems lighter than air.

Mourning

I leave the house in the morning, as the sky brightens enough for me to call it day. I want to run. I want to feel braids streaming out behind me again, my gingham dress whipping at my legs the way it did when I was a child - but instead I walk. It is disorienting, the sun starting to come up behind me – night passing into day, day breaking on a prairie town that never was, breaking over the back of a house no one lives in. My eyes sting and I feel as though I am floating out over the lawn. When I come to the dirt road I turn around and look behind me. The urge, the desire, the compulsion to look back overwhelms everything – and I think it always will. After passing a night that I cannot shake, I stand still for a moment and look back. The sky is empty and grey. The trees around the house look elegant, their bare branches encasing the house, making a living frame, rooting it to time, rooting it to place. The lace curtains close off the interior space and the house seems inert. A little bit of wind stirs - and then, as I move away, the corner of the curtain seems to lift. My eyes burn and it seems as though the whole bolt of

lace sways along with the trees. I stare without blinking, at the glass, through the glass at the curtain, looking for something within, looking for something moving inside. Instead, all I see, so pale and still, is my own reflection: my face, my eyes and my hair, shoulder length and dark, swimming in perfect replication of the original but not the original, apart from it and different somehow. I could expect anything from the image I see; the corners of my mouth's reflection give nothing away. I think this, and then I walk away, already mourning what I had lost – which was nothing.

As data, memories lack wholeness and resist attempts to number them, hold them, bind them or label them. Memories lack structure and the word “hearsay” leaks out from between blocks of italicized text. The mind remembers the word “fiction” and it rises to the mouth and sits there, beating its wings hard against the teeth and jaw. Affect, too, is problematic and understood as a symptom, has connotations that to me seem overtly gendered. When I write “affect” on the page, my mind whispers “irrational,” and “feminine.” “*Hysteria*,” I think. I have been reading about Victorian-era Canada. My mouth puckers. I think of smelling salts. Memories go where they want; neurons are never still. Early in this thesis, I described the Prince House ghost as the refugee of a specific kind of archival violence, here is why: as middle-aged, sick/dying auxiliary wives to a prominent but parochial man, Marguerite, Emma, Rosa and Emily Prince had little claim on public interest and imagination. Their flesh could not be colonized by discourses of lust, by the promise of fertility or the fascinating qualities of youth and beauty. They appear to lack extra-ordinary personality traits and seem remarkable only in the uncanny repetition of their deaths. So, the archive moved forward without them and they were forgotten. Yet, some trace remains imprinted on the collective psyche and

over and over, stories of haunting are told. Somewhere between the spectacle of absence and the solidity of archival presence, they walk, populating a liminal space between forgetting and memory, speaking their names into the darkness, over and over. Phelan's musings on our relationship to the absent bodies of the past, examining her assertion that the affective hollow of these bodies (which we still want to touch) "might allow us to understand more deeply why we long to hold bodies that are gone" (3).

In the following section, I turn to my own locality in relation to the past, much of which is implicated within my own past, which *is* lost, which I do sometimes *long* for. I have been speaking, throughout this introduction, of the anatomy of this project. However, in this last "site of convergence," this last site of analysis, I confess myself stumped – marooned within my own metaphor. If this last segment speaks to the desire of touch and the fleetingness of contact, then in analogy to the body this section must be likened to the impression into one body's cells of another's. This touch, this need for touch, has been described in other places as trauma, as mourning, as yearning, nostalgia, loss – love. For my purposes here, I settle into the word "empathy" which connotes a moment of synchronicity between two bodies and the momentary blurring between self and other. There is no way to quantify this. It simply is or is not, flashing up like a sudden passion and receding again – as though it was never there. Only the flush and breath that was affected, the feeling and the loss of that feeling remain to suggest it was ever present at all.

CHAPTER 4

HOLDING BODIES, LETTING GO

Disordering Remains

At the start of this project I wondered what sort of archive would remain after the end, imagined myself throwing archival materials high into the air and writing their subsequent disarray. I like this image; it makes me appear braver in the face of chaos than I feel. Losing the last comforting vestiges of “truth” and “historical fact” was painful and the space left vacant when these words went away is bruised. My growing awareness of erasure and the violent suppression and selection of some (gendered) narratives over others felt empowering. Seeing and speaking this erasure out loud was satisfying - until I saw evidence of this perpetuating cycle of (gendered) occlusion in my own work, in the pages of *this* work. Since the start of this project I have never not been implicated and the remains of this implication are messy, bringing to mind the story someone once told me about the way the Prince House came to be planted firmly on the soil of Heritage Park. With great artistry, a location had been chosen and a foundation carefully dug. The house, meanwhile, dismantled and (temporarily) ruined arrived at the park and was hoisted high into the air. This image evokes, so strongly, a space of air, an indeterminate liminality slowly being compressed as two pieces prepare to converge – the forcing away of ambiguity, the joining of a circle. Ouroboros, a serpent eating her own tail: the past and the future, the authority of both origin and annihilation. The raw, newly turned earth and the old walls and stones, separated by a thin slice of air and moving closer. This would have been done carefully over a long stretch of time. I imagine

hardhats and blueprints. Finally the two halves touched, the gap between past and present closed, the signified and signifier melding together to form a new sign – almost. At the last moment workers noticed that the two halves did not fit. The foundation, so painstakingly excavated and prepared, planned and executed, was too small. I imagine a moment of horror. The rest I picture in black-and-white triple-time: workers running around and around the site, digging it out with shovels to accompanying piano, something by Scott Joplin. This moment reminds me so much of the way research happens, the way knowledge is codified. *Knowledge is for cutting*, Foucault tells us. History is for creatively reassembling. The Prince House got a new foundation, dug while it dangled, precariously above a gaping hole in the earth and new stories were invented, repeated and codified, others vanished. “In the West,” de Certeau tells us “the group...discovers its faith in the confession that it extracts from a dominated being” (*The Writing of History* 5): the lives and deaths of women, their forms, their names and ages, the house in which they lived, their role in the archivization of others, the surrogacy of these stories in the bodies of others. In this last section I recognize what de Certeau calls the ephemeral quality of every victory over death. Inevitably, he says, “the reaper returns to cut his swath” (5). What this explicates is the fact that killing has less to do with forgetting and more to do with remembering which, in turn, recalls the image of the past sneaking invisibly forward, reaching its hand towards us, anticipating touch. The past is less gone than even I would like it to be and I am destabilized by this, destabilized by the way my body is implicated in a manner that is utterly different than I first believed. I must now perform an entirely different act – one that is centered on the opposite of touch, which is release.

Absence makes bodies want to do things, embody things, take things on, take them in. Yet this desire to be and do speaks from a place that is just as violent as its counterpart and opposite (the desire to repress, occlude, forget). I think of the quotation I selected to begin this treatise, written in a book about mourning, bodies, absence and touch, the hypothesis that "...bodies come to be "ours" when we recognize them as traumatic. Sensing their need for a foothold, we take them into us. Sooner or later we are burrowing into them" (18). I wonder about this hunch of Phelan's, this idea that has haunted this study. Thinking about it now, at the close, I think Phelan is not altogether wrong, yet by no means is she totally right. Bodies come to be ours, I now believe, because *we* need *them* to stay, not because they need us. The Prince House women, by seeming to disappear into dust, made me mortally afraid of my own slippage into silence, my own vanishing and so I wanted to keep them with me, performing through them my own imitations of immortality. This is the erotic simulacrum, the desire and belief in the desire that by embodying absence, by writing into it, by positioning ourselves as the eloquent and tender receptors of absence we can take it into us, and in so doing make it go away: the desire for our own origins and a misguided attempt at stilling chaos and finding truth, which, if we accept what Derrida tells us, is the drive to death.

The hypothesis under which this study began is that silences are never innocent and that absences are political, gendered markers of power and desire. Writing under this hypothesis I made extensive reference to the work of Jennings and Tunney (authors of *Ghost Stories of Heritage Park*), highlighting the different ways their work on ghosts has been suppressed. Yet, in early drafts of this project, I myself perpetuated this act of erasure by neglecting to quote Jennings and Tunney at all. Their voices were, for a long

time, completely absent from these pages, while their detractors I quoted in detail. In recognizing the way I nearly silenced two of the female writers whose work is so central to this project, I feel I reached a material manifestation of my hypothesis, proving it to myself conclusively – though not in the way I had intended. Yet de Certeau's words remain: "haunted places are the only ones we can live in" (*Walking in the City* 68). The touch of ghosts (the killing touch, the wounding touch, the redemptive touch) does not go away. Instead, the remainders left behind when "relevant" was parsed from "irrelevant" come back, seeping into the edges of discourse, filling what de Certeau calls "its rifts and crannies" (*The Writing of History* 4). The absence I once wanted to embody, the ghost in the architecture, the hand that lifts the curtain, I am no longer called to be, am not longer called to perform. Instead I must now do something altogether more difficult – which is letting go.

Building

This project about archives is now itself archive(d) and in terms of the strengths and insights it offers, I point first to the objective I undertake in this study to write performatively, to make writing perform. This endeavour is difficult and messy, vulnerable and all too easy to over-inflate. By placing this work on the heels of Pollock's essay "Performing Writing" and Hall's work "Patty and Me: Performative Encounters between an Historical Body and the History of Images" I aim to place myself within a lineage of female scholars writing from a place of vulnerability and critical insight that I find tremendously energizing and endlessly provocative. From a logistical perspective, performance studies as a program of study and an inter/intra-discipline is in a nascent state in top-tier Canadian universities. This project, predicated on theories of

performance as well as performative writing, is the statement of my intention to contribute to a critical mass of scholarship currently being produced by such Canadian academics as Laura Levin, Kim Solga, Brian Rusted and Susan Bennett. It is exciting to envision this field growing into a strong and vibrant community in Canada and I see this project, in a small way, as my contribution to this endeavour.

I would like to point to the social value of this project second. The strength of this claim rests, I believe, less in the specific subject matter I address but in my decision to enter the discussion in the first place. The landscape of historiography is cloudy and in many ways it is discouraging – it is a difficult site in which to make meaning. However it is also a space of ongoing debate and discussion and this quality is tremendously engaging. The past will always dog the present, we will always ghost the past. The way we do this is not innocent, has never been innocent, has never been (nor will likely ever be) a-political. For this reason it is crucial that the voices in the debate are diverse and many. I leave this project with a strong foundational knowledge of the questions, arguments, issues and contenders at play in this arena and this knowledge positions me to continue to evolve as a scholar and an individual inside these evolving lines of action and inquiry.

Letting Go

By providing a variety of archives, all with distinct thresholds and capacities, I had hoped to provide the anatomy of a ghost. I think, in many ways, I succeeded. The first site of convergence, by reiterating the bare bones of history provided a skeleton, the elegant frame of bones from which to hang the lives, deaths and stories of four women who have gone away. Next, the living history site provided the plush casing of skin,

replete with what is *almost* life but, just when it matters the most, is not. This is the skin of the ghost, flushed but dead. The living history village, by referring either only to itself, or to “facts” situated in some external location, ghosts the present by placing itself in a locality it refers to but does not exist within: promising, shimmering, empty. The third archive, which is my favourite, presents an archive that implicates the body of the reader by instilling affect and making feelings. This is the crux of death, the way that the dead thing, the absent thing cannot feel and so forces you, me, *us*, to feel in its stead. Roach calls this “surrogation” (30). This performance of withholding what is most wanted forces touch in an unlikely arena: the body. This touch always takes me by surprise, even though I go looking for it everywhere, even though I long for it constantly. When my heart beats fast and the hair around the base of my neck lifts and straightens I am enthralled. This convergence enchants me because it is simultaneously imagined and real and because it carries with it a momentary fusing of cells between two organisms which momentarily share the same space. This touch, this need for touch, has been described in other places as trauma, as mourning, as yearning, nostalgia, loss – love. For my purposes here, I settle into the word “empathy” which connotes a moment of synchronicity between two bodies and the momentary blurring between self and other. There is no way to quantify this. It simply is or is not, flashing up like a sudden passion and receding again – as though it was never there. Only the flush and breath that was affected, the feeling and the loss of that feeling remain to suggest it was ever present at all. This fleetingness is beautiful because it cannot last, because it is proven only inside the subject, crystallizing itself there, becoming what Derrida calls “the beauty of the beautiful” (11).

Moving Forward

My plans for this material at one time included a foray into the concerns and capacities of trauma. Derrida's work on archives forced me to confront Freud, and Freud is the bridge into trauma theory that, through the work of Cathy Caruth, I have delicately probed, working my way from the outside in. Trauma has a distinct connection to memory and the notion of haunting because a traumatic event gains agency through time, rather than losing it – the same as a haunting does. Interpreted literally, a ghost is a victim of death, of an excess of violence through which she loses her voice, her body, her life. She dies and is forgotten, her name is not spoken, her body is no longer touched – she disappears into ash. After this is the unfolding of time over which, somehow, she comes back. She returns through rumours and gossip, lore and legend and the sharp edges of these fragments of hearsay saw at the edges of historical discourse, interrupt the smooth flow of truth and fact. We feel this presence in our bodies and we are upset, sometimes beside ourselves, troubled, annoyed, disturbed. The invisible story, which is gone, refuses to let go and instead holds us in thrall: trauma, haunting. Similarly, the victim of trauma, by living through an event that is troubling (perhaps horrendous, certainly wounding) is subsequently forced to re-live this trauma against her/his own will. It is the re-living, not the event itself, that is so traumatizing, which is interesting because it points to survival and underscores its capacity to hurt, to kill.

This word, the idea of *survival*, ghosts this study, is suggested everywhere and yet never spoken aloud. The way we make and interact with archives, the way we describe and crave convergence, the desire to know about origins is predicated on the desperation we feel to survive. The way this survival is construed over time changes and this is

important. When I think about women who lived and died before my time, on the level prairies of Western Canada around the turn of the twentieth century, as I hold their prayer books, bibles, sheet music and ladies magazines in my hands, I take note of an ethos of survival that is not my own. As a colleague pointed out to me over the course of my work on this project, if one believes in life after death, in heaven, in immortality and the soul's ability to continue, then one craves death – or at least is less terrified by its shadow. Death in this construct indicates a passageway through the survival of life and into a different survival – a different way of carrying on. However, if one does not believe these things, if one views death as the great end to everything, then death and terror become the same thing and survival is emphatically placed on one's body remaining alive. This difference brings to mind Pollock's statement that "history's very dependence on mimetic illusion suggests at least the possibility of mimetic *elusion* – or the *impossibility* of finally capturing the self-subject ricocheting between one eye/I and an-other, endlessly mirrored in reciprocal looking" (6). I see in this description two paths to survival that, in their profound difference, underpin everything. Across the space of this difference I sense two selves, circling each other, able to look but not touch. The circularity of these footsteps, the way the past is re-lived and re-experienced in a way that is often against our will (and therefore profoundly destabilizing) seems to return agency to the past. This idea is incredibly engaging. However, the possible implication of trauma on the thematic content of this study is not a trajectory I was able to follow. Yet this resonance has instilled a deep interest in the connections between feminine discourses of resistance and body politics, trauma and embodiment. I remain deeply engaged by de Certeau's notion of bodies making meaning by moving through space as

well as the capacity of the absent body to challenge the existing body politic. These are areas I hope to touch on in future scholarship.

In this study I aimed to explore the cultural traces that emerge when one attempts to re-inhabit the absent spaces in the recorded narratives of history. This investigation of absence excited me and I wondered what I would find. What I eventually uncovered, what eventually was made manifest, is (of course) a different kind of absence. Trying to re-inhabit memory in many ways parallels the activity of the living history museum and the effect is much the same; roaming through the liminal space of history/memory is to find that both are places we walk through but cannot live in. The site becomes subsumed within the memory until it itself becomes the smooth container of affect; mine is lined with bricks and steeply angled turrets. Additionally, I also feel I run the risk of encountering someone who resembles me perfectly but, of course, is not me; the subjective 'I' that is me now was never there in the first place. And this is a project about absence, after all.

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